



Author(s)	Hill, Joshua L.
Title	U.S. Special Forces: culture warriors
Publisher	Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School
Issue Date	2014 12
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10945/44580">http://hdl.handle.net/10945/44580</a>

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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**U.S. SPECIAL FORCES: CULTURE WARRIORS**

by

Joshua L. Hill

December 2014

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2014	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> U.S. SPECIAL FORCES: CULTURE WARRIORS			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Joshua L. Hill				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  <p>U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) are consistently called upon to work by, with, and through indigenous forces to conduct special warfare. Current SF doctrine reflects an increasing desire for SF operators to be culturally proficient in order to work closely with locals, advise foreign militaries, and build relationships with host-nation counterparts. Despite the doctrinal emphasis on cultural proficiency, SF doctrine offers little concrete direction as to how to become culturally competent, or how to measure levels of cultural proficiency.</p> <p>This thesis aims to provide insights into cultural competency by investigating academic literature surrounding culture, and by looking outside of SF at examples of cross-cultural competency from historic cases: the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in World War II, Military Transition Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the McDonald's restaurant franchise. By looking at historical examples of military operations and international businesses, SF can gain insight into the best practices and common pitfalls that come from working with foreign cultures.</p> <p>This thesis finds that cultural proficiency can be increased by following the best practices of the McDonald's Corporation and the OSS, and by placing top-down emphasis on cultural training and normalizing that training at the tactical level.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> culture training, cultural proficiency, cultural understanding, defining culture, historical best practices, pre-deployment training, advisor skills, cross-cultural competence, localization strategy, ARSOF 2022			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 89	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

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**U.S. SPECIAL FORCES: CULTURE WARRIORS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) are consistently called upon to work by, with, and through indigenous forces to conduct special warfare. Current SF doctrine reflects an increasing desire for SF operators to be culturally proficient in order to work closely with locals, advise foreign militaries, and build relationships with host-nation counterparts. Despite the doctrinal emphasis on cultural proficiency, SF doctrine offers little concrete direction as to how to become culturally competent, or how to measure levels of cultural proficiency.

This thesis aims to provide insights into cultural competency by investigating academic literature surrounding culture, and by looking outside of SF at examples of cross-cultural competency from historic cases: the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in World War II, Military Transition Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the McDonald's restaurant franchise. By looking at historical examples of military operations and international businesses, SF can gain insight into the best practices and common pitfalls that come from working with foreign cultures.

This thesis finds that cultural proficiency can be increased by following the best practices of the McDonald's Corporation and the OSS, and by placing top-down emphasis on cultural training and normalizing that training at the tactical level.



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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AAR	after action report
AN/PAQ-4	infrared aiming light
AO	area of operations
AOR	area of responsibility
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ATN	Army Training Network
CATS	Combined Arms Training Strategies
COIN	counterinsurgency
DOD	Department of Defense
ETT	embedded training team
FC3	foundations of cross-cultural competence
GWOT	global war on terror
HAZMAT	hazardous material
IGFC	Iraqi Ground Forces Command
JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
JFKSWCS or SWCS	John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
LAN	local area network
LTC	lieutenant colonel
LTG	lieutenant general
MAJ	major
MEDEVAC	medical evacuation
MiTT	Military Transition Team
MNSTCI	Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq
MTN	mountain
MWR	morale, welfare, and recreation
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School

ODA	Operational Detachments-Alpha
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OGA	other governmental organization
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
PT	physical fitness training
QRF	quick reaction force
SEAL	Sea Air Land
SF	Special Forces
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SFG(A)	Special Forces Group (Airborne)
SFQC	Special Forces Qualification Course
SOF	Special Operations Forces
STEE	special technical electronic equipment
TSCP	Theater Security Cooperation Program
TTPs	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
USASFC	United States Army Special Forces Command
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
WWII	World War II

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First, I would like to share my sincere thanks to my wife, Veronica, and my wonderful children. They have shown the utmost level of patience, support, and understanding throughout not only my time at Naval Postgraduate School, but during my entire military career. I am most grateful for their continued support, and I could not continue to serve our nation without it.

I would also like to express my gratefulness to my advisors, Dr. Heather S. Gregg and COL (R) Robert Burks. Dr. Gregg's mentorship, advice, and assistance with this thesis have been invaluable, and the lessons that Dr. Gregg has imparted to me will leave an everlasting impression on my military career. I am particularly thankful for COL (R) Burks' mentorship and guidance during my entire tenure at NPS and this thesis writing process.

I am also thankful to my peers and colleagues, both in the Defense Analysis Department and the Naval War College. The knowledge and experience that I have gained from sharing this educational experience has undoubtedly made me a more knowledgeable and proficient Army officer.

Last, I would like to thank the soldiers, NCOs, and officers of the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne). Without their encouragement and support, my attendance at NPS would have never happened.



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## I. PROBLEM AND BACKGROUND

U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) are consistently called upon to work by, with, and through indigenous forces in the conduct of special warfare. In many cases, the success of U.S. Army SF lies in their ability to interact closely with locals and foreign militaries, and to build relationships with their host-nation counterparts. Despite the working knowledge that SF operators may possess of their area's native language, they may be ill-prepared to address the cultural nuances they can face while being immersed in a foreign culture. Without proper training to operate in foreign cultures, SF operators may be at an inherent disadvantage in achieving their missions and objectives.

Recent SF deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan suggest that SF operators may not have adequate training in the culture of the areas in which they are operating, and this lack of cultural knowledge has affected operations. Since inception, U.S. Army Special Forces has served as one of the "go to" Department of Defense elements for subject matter experts in dealing with foreign cultures. Lieutenant General Cleveland, the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Commander, points out that "as a force, we (Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF))<sup>1</sup> are the cornerstone... maintaining alliance, building partner-nation capacity, developing surrogate capabilities and conducting multilateral or unilateral special operations with absolute precision."<sup>2</sup>

In spite of years of recent combat experience among the SF community, considerable debate exists on the type and amount of cultural training necessary for SF to perform its mission of working by, with, and through local forces and populations to achieve various objectives. Are SF operators adequately trained to conduct culture-centric operations? Furthermore, is SF conducting its culture training appropriately? Is language training the most effective means of training operators in a foreign culture? Some SF operators believe that an unnecessary amount of emphasis is placed on culture

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<sup>1</sup> While there is considerable overlap between Special Operations Forces (SOF) and Special Forces (SF), this thesis will primarily focus on U.S. Army Special Forces.

<sup>2</sup> United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, "ARSOF 2022," *Special Warfare* 26, no. 2 (2013): 3, <http://www.militarynewsnetwork.com/publications/specialwarfareapril2013.pdf>.

and language when operators could be focusing on more measurable skills, such as marksmanship, medical training or more advanced-level skills.<sup>3</sup> As noted in a 2011 survey of Special Forces operators, “Cultural training was one of the first things to be eliminated when the unit received additional tasks.”<sup>4</sup>

The Department of Defense (DOD) and U.S. Army Special Operations Command have continued to push for a more culturally adept force. In 2005, the Department of the Army published the *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* and in 2013 USASOC published *Special Warfare: ARSOF 2022*.<sup>5</sup> Both of these publications express the intentions of the Army and USASOC to create and sustain a force that is an expert in the cultures and languages of their respective areas of responsibility. However, both the *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* and “ARSOF 2022” describe lofty objectives without thoroughly addressing some of the hurdles that may present themselves if such a high level of emphasis is placed on culture and language. For example, how does the SF regiment ensure that its operators are culturally proficient without a metric for proficiency? Or, how do commanders balance cultural training with other mission specific training requirements? Additionally, how do operators gain true cultural proficiency in their area of operations (AO) when so many cultures are present in that AO? These publications have considerable differences on what culture is and its relevance to U.S. military and SF missions. With a lack of clarity on its definition, how to train for it, and how to measure proficiency, instilling cultural proficiency in SF is a considerable challenge.

## **A. RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY**

With these expectations for cultural proficiency in mind, this thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

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<sup>3</sup> This observation has been made by the author during his 16-year military career.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Bushwell, “Keeping Special Forces Special: Regional Proficiency in Special Forces” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 80.

<sup>5</sup> Department of the Army, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2005), <http://www.defense.gov/news/mar2005/d20050330roadmap.pdf>; United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, “ARSOF 2022.”

Are U.S. Army Special Forces placing the appropriate amount of emphasis on cultural training? What specifically should SF operators be trained to know regarding culture? Can cultural proficiency be measured?

This thesis uses qualitative methods in an attempt to gain a clearer perspective of the appropriate level of cultural understanding, proficiency, and training that is required for Special Forces soldiers. In its qualitative approach, this thesis will investigate three trajectories in particular. First, this thesis will examine how both academia and the business world view culture and its importance when working closely with foreign cultures. SF should have greater cultural training because working “by, with, and through” the population is the hallmark of Army Special Forces and requires understanding culture. Establishing an encompassing definition is an essential first step in understanding culture and training to be culturally proficient.

Second, current publications and guidelines from the Department of Defense, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Army Special Operations Command will be analyzed in order to determine what the current emphasis and expectations are on culture in the force and what the goals are for Special Forces in regard to culture proficiency.

Third, case studies are used to examine the effects that cultural understanding and proficiency have played in attempting to build relationships, both at the personal and group levels. Specifically, this thesis will look beyond SF to learn lessons from other military and non-military organizations operating in foreign culture. Case studies include the predecessors of modern SF, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in WWII and the success that the OSS achieved by recruiting refugees and immigrants who were already versed in their native cultures.<sup>6</sup> Another case study will look at the varied success of MiTT (Military Transition Teams), who were organized similarly to an SF ODA and were assigned a mission that is regularly conducted by SF, including their training and implementation in the global war on terror (GWOT).<sup>7</sup> Lastly, this thesis draws on

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> Sean Pirone, “Security Force Assistance: Strategic, Advisory, and Partner Nation Considerations” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010).

examples from the McDonald's Corporation and their astounding success of expanding their franchise overseas. By examining groups outside of the special operations community, SF can gain a fresh perspective on cultural training and how to leverage culture to achieve mission success.

By focusing on qualitative data drawn from a review of military doctrine along with studies of culture from the academic and business worlds and case studies from outside the SF regiment, this thesis aims to make sound recommendations to assist U.S. Army Special Forces leaders in preparing SF operators to be culturally proficient.

This thesis finds that, first, defining culture is a perennial debate in academia; however, rather than focusing on what culture is, SF could hone its training on what culture does, specifically the way that culture shapes norms and values, which in turn shape behavior. SF faces a challenge, however, in training in culture in general. Specifically, when training to become culturally proficient, SF leaders must balance training for this skill set with proficiency in other combat skills. However, as demonstrated by MiTT training, focusing primarily on combat skills training in lieu of cultural training can limit operational success. Also, as reinforced by the hasty selection and training of MiTTs, SOF cannot be mass produced.

Second, as proven by the OSS, selection of personnel can be paramount when trying to build a truly culturally proficient force. Specifically, the OSS sought to recruit personnel who were native speakers and intimately aware of the culture with which they would engage. The OSS recognized that it was much easier to train a culture and language expert to be a soldier than it was to train a soldier to be an expert in culture and language.

Third, as validated by McDonald's expansion into Asia, SF operators need the latitude to create their own localized strategy. In other words, SF operators should be able to identify what cultural lines of operation will be successful in the areas they are operating and address those lines as they see appropriate.

## **B. THESIS STRUCTURE**

The thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter II examines the concept of culture by looking at how academia, the business world, and the U.S. military define culture. The focus of this chapter is to gain an understanding of culture by looking closely at the differing views and definitions of culture and, as best as possible, to create a working definition of what culture is and what it does.

Chapter III examines current U.S. Army doctrine and training in culture, and what the DOD expects from SF based on that doctrine. This chapter also looks at how the SF Regiment currently trains its SF operators to be culturally proficient.

Chapter IV looks at three case studies of both military organizations and international business as they interact with foreign cultures. The focus of this chapter is to identify the best practices and common pitfalls of working with other cultures, and what lessons from these cases can be transferred to SF in their own operations with other foreign cultures.

Chapter V provides recommendations based on the analysis of the cases studies and examination of culture in the previous chapters. This chapter seeks to offer suggestions that can help SF leaders better prepare their SF operators to be culturally proficient and thereby increase their effectiveness overseas.

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## II. DEFINING CULTURE AND ITS ROLE IN ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS

How culture is defined and how it is understood varies widely across academic disciplines. For example, some academic scholars shy away from culture and refuse to define it, while other scholars refer to culture simply as a concept. Sociologist Orlando Patterson notes that “there is strong resistance to attempts to explain any aspect of human behavior in cultural terms,”<sup>8</sup> while anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber and others explain, “the concept (culture) has had a name for less than eighty years and that until very recently only a handful of scholars were interested in the idea.”<sup>9</sup> The business world takes a slightly less conceptual view of culture and focuses more on the role of culture in economics, negotiations or in transnational business relations. The U.S. military and its component commands have varying definitions of culture as well. This lack of consensus in defining culture, its purpose, and how to study it presents considerable challenges for USASOC and its requirement to make SF culturally proficient.

This chapter provides a basic overview of definitions of culture from a variety of sources. It begins by looking at academic discussions about culture, including from the fields of anthropology and sociology, highlighting that there is no one agreed to definition. Then, this chapter considers the literature from international business and looks at the role that culture plays in economics, negotiations, and transnational business. Finally, the chapter outlines various U.S. military sources on culture and their role in military operations.

This chapter asserts that, by examining each of these groups and taking the applicable understandings of culture from each, USASOC may be better prepared to train its SF operators. By examining how academia has defined culture, what has been

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<sup>8</sup> Orlando Patterson, “Taking Culture Seriously: A Framework and an Afro-American Illustration,” in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, eds. Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 202.

<sup>9</sup> Alfred L. Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Wayne Untereiner, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1952), 6–7, accessed June 6, 2014, <http://www.questia.com/read/100067373/culture-a-critical-review-of-concepts-and-definitions>.



successful for the business world in using cultural understanding to generate profits, coupled with what has previously been utilized by the DOD, the U.S. Army, and Army SOF, SF may benefit from all of these efforts to understand culture and how it affects operations.

#### **A. ACADEMIC DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE**

The academic world has no universally accepted definition of culture. This is most likely due to the fact that culture is a difficult to define facet of human behavior and society, and academic disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and social psychology approach culture through different lenses. Each of these fields has its own methods of inquiry and understanding of how culture shapes and is shaped by human thought and behavior. However, despite this lack of consensus, considering academic literature on culture offers SF a greater understanding of not only what culture is, but what culture does and how it can be leveraged in SF operations.

Even the most cursory search on the topic of culture in a single field, such as anthropology, yields a wide range of descriptions on what culture is. In *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Alfred L. Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Wayne Untereiner describe culture as, “one of the key notions of contemporary American thought. In explanatory importance and in generality of application, it is comparable to such categories as gravity in physics, disease in medicine, and evolution in biology.”<sup>10</sup> Kroeber, Kluckhohn, and Untereiner add that, “considering that the concept (culture) has had a name for less than eighty years and that until very recently only a handful of scholars were interested in the idea, it is not surprising that full agreement and precision had not yet been attained.”<sup>11</sup> Kroeber, Kluckhohn, and Untereiner’s comments demonstrate only some of the challenges associated with understanding an amorphous and multifaceted phenomenon, such as culture.

Anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn further demonstrate the challenges associated with defining culture in their comprehensive study of different definitions.

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<sup>10</sup> Kroeber, Kluckhohn, and Untereiner, *Culture: A Critical Review*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Kroeber, Kluckhohn, and Untereiner, *Culture: A Critical Review*, 6–7.

Their examination produces over one hundred different definitions of culture.<sup>12</sup> Some of their definitions include:

- “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”
- “The sum of all [a people’s] activities, customs, and beliefs.”
- “The beliefs, systems of thought, practical arts, manner of living, customs, traditions, and all socially regularized ways of acting are also called culture.”
- “The various industries of a people, as well as art, burial customs, etc., which throw light upon their life and thought.”
- “culture...refers to that part of the total setting [of human existence] which includes the material objects of human manufacture, techniques, social orientations, points of view, and sanctioned ends that are the immediate conditioning factors underlying behavior.”<sup>13</sup>

Historical and cultural sociologist Orlando Patterson surmises, “in academic and intellectual circles, including an influential group of professional anthropologists and nearly all sociologists, there is strong resistance to attempts to explain any aspect of human behavior in cultural terms.”<sup>14</sup> Patterson’s explanation points to the complexity of culture as an academic concept, how difficult it is to define culture, and how culture functions.

Another major line of inquiry in academic studies of culture focuses on what culture does rather than what its specific attributes may be. For example, rather than attempting to define culture, Kaplan and Manners consider, “how do different cultural systems work and how have these cultural systems, in their considerable variety, come to be as they are?”<sup>15</sup> In this study, Kaplan and Manners choose to refer to culture as, “a class of phenomena conceptualized by anthropologists to investigate specific

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<sup>12</sup> David Kaplan and Robert Manners, *Culture Theory* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Kroeber, Kluckhohn, and Untereiner, *Culture: A Critical Review*, 81–84.

<sup>14</sup> Patterson, “Taking Culture Seriously,” 202.

<sup>15</sup> Kaplan and Manners, *Culture Theory*, 3.

questions.”<sup>16</sup> They further understand culture as “phenomena which account for patterns of behaving that cannot be fully explained.”<sup>17</sup> Kaplan and Manners add that, “culture is admittedly an omnibus term, it may be too omnibus to be useful as an analytic tool.”<sup>18</sup> Kaplan and Manners use an example from Marshall Sahlins to describe what culture does: “it (culture) is a system of things, social relations, and ideas, a complex mechanism by which people exist and persist. It is organized not merely to order relations, but to sustain human existence.”<sup>19</sup>

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz notes that, “the term ‘culture’ has by now acquired a certain aura of ill-repute in social anthropological circles because of the multiplicity of its referents and the studied vagueness with which it has all too often been invoked.”<sup>20</sup> Geertz adds, “culture is most effectively treated purely as a symbolic system “in its own terms,” by isolating its elements, specifying the internal relationships among those elements, and then characterizing the whole system in some general way.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, Geertz emphasizes not being overly concerned with what culture is, but rather understanding culture as a system and how it affects the people associated within that system. Geertz proposes, “culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns-customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters, but as a set of control mechanisms-plans, recipes, rules, instructions or programs for the governing of behavior.”<sup>22</sup> Geertz adds, “man is precisely the animal most desperately dependent upon such extragenetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms, such cultural programs, for ordering his behavior.”<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, anthropologist Margaret Mead emphasizes culture as a system, as opposed to a list of attributes. Mead states,

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<sup>16</sup> Kaplan and Manners, *Culture Theory*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Kaplan and Manners, *Culture Theory*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Kaplan and Manners, *Culture Theory*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Kaplan and Manners, *Culture Theory*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, NY: Basic, 1973), 89.

<sup>21</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 44.

<sup>23</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 44.

Culture is a process through which man creates his living environment and is able to improve it progressively by retaining and modifying advances made by previous generations. The word culture is used in the general sense to describe the process of man's species wide culture –building behavior.<sup>24</sup>

Mead, like Geertz, argues that culture can be learned and passed on to others and that much can be learned from studying how culture is learned between people.<sup>25</sup>

Social scientist Gert Jan Hofstede describes culture as

what we call the unwritten rules of how to be a good member of the group; it defines the group as a “moral circle.” It inspires symbols, heroes, rituals, laws, religions, taboos, and all kinds of practices - but its core is hidden in unconscious values that change at a far slower rate than the practices.<sup>26</sup>

The study of culture, according to GJ Hofstede, is aimed at better understanding the official and unofficial rules that bind groups of people together. Organizational anthropologist Geert Hofstede, father and colleague of Gert Jan Hofstede, defines culture as “the collective program of the mind,”<sup>27</sup> and that, “culture is the glue that holds society together.”<sup>28</sup> His research demonstrates the depth of the subject of culture and the level of importance culture plays in society.

Similar to Gert Jan Hofstede, Francis Fukuyama describes a useful subset of culture known as social capital. “Social capital can be defined simply as a set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permits them to cooperate with one another.”<sup>29</sup> Social capital could be compared to rapport, or in other instances social capital could equate to trust. Fukuyama describes that after gaining social capital, “members of the group come to expect that others will behave reliably and honestly, then

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<sup>24</sup> Margaret Mead, *Continuities in Cultural Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964), 36.

<sup>25</sup> Mead, *Continuities in Cultural Evolution*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, “Hofstede’s View of Culture,” accessed June 6, 2014, <http://www.geerthofstede.nl/>.

<sup>27</sup> “Geert Hofstede on Culture,” YouTube video,” 32:22, October 22, 2011, <http://www.geerthofstede.nl/>.

<sup>28</sup> “Geert Hofstede on Culture.”

<sup>29</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “Social Capital,” in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, eds. Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 98.

they will come to trust one another; trust acts like a lubricant that makes any group or organization run more efficiently.”<sup>30</sup>

Anthropologist Ruth Benedict contends that understanding culture helps in making sense of the actions of another group. For example, when calculating what actions the Japanese might take in World War II, Benedict argued that a greater understanding of Japanese culture would help anticipate Japanese behavior and responses to U.S. actions.<sup>31</sup> In her seminal work, *The Sword and the Chrysanthemum*, Benedict concludes

whether the issue was military or diplomatic, every insight was important. We had to try to understand Japanese habits of thought and emotion and the patterns into which these habits fell. We had to know the sanctions behind these actions and opinions. We had to put aside the premises on which we act as Americans and to keep ourselves from leaping to the easy conclusion that what we would do in an easy situation is what they would do.<sup>32</sup>

In the post-September 11 security world, Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* offers another perspective on how culture affects behavior. He argues that civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people, and that “cultures can change and the nature of their impacts on politics and economics can vary from one period to another. Yet, the major differences in political and economic development among civilizations are clearly rooted in their different cultures.”<sup>33</sup> Huntington’s observations suggest that culture is not a fixed entity, but rather a fluid way of life that has profound effects on the people living in the area where that culture exists.

Despite all of these variances in defining what culture is and does, a few common themes do emerge from the multitude of definitions. First, culture can be shared and

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<sup>30</sup> Fukuyama, “Social Capital,” 98.

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (New York, NY: Mariner Books, 2005), 4–5.

<sup>32</sup> Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 4–5.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 29.

transferred among groups.<sup>34</sup> This observation suggests that outsiders to a culture can observe and learn the culture of a particular group. Second, the importance of culture within groups and society can be recognized as one of the binding elements of that group.<sup>35</sup> Observing and understanding key “binding” aspects of a culture can be useful for understanding not only how that group operates, but also what its priorities are. Third, cultures change. This observation stresses that assessing another culture requires constant evaluation as cultures are ever-changing. It also suggests that understanding what makes cultures change could be useful for understanding what influences that group.

Realizing the importance of cultural norms, practices, and certain cultural nuances is particularly important for SF. For example, Geertz’ explanation of culture suggests that, “extragenetic cultural programs” can be learned or adopted by an outsider and used to gain acceptance or familiarity within that group. This observation could be directly applicable in the case of SF operators working by, with, and through foreign indigenous forces. Similarly, Fukuyama’s definition of social capital could be very useful to SF operators as they attempt to build relationships with people from a foreign culture. By identifying and catering to the informal values and norms of a group, SF operators may be able to build rapport and credibility with that group, thereby gaining social capital. Training SF operators to identify values and norms of a culture in order to gain social capital could prove more effective than attempting to train an operator to be an expert of a variety of cultures. Recognizing how certain cultural considerations can influence military and diplomatic decision making in foreign cultures can certainly contribute to the effectiveness of SF operators. Finally, by understanding and applying the previously stated themes of culture, SF operators may benefit from using one of the academic descriptions of culture similar to that provided by Geert Hofstede, “culture is the glue that holds society together.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Mead, *Continuities in Cultural Evolution*, 36.

<sup>35</sup> “Geert Hofstede on Culture.”

<sup>36</sup> “Geert Hofstede on Culture.”

## **B. THE BUSINESS WORLD'S DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE**

Another useful body of literature for understanding culture comes from the business world. This literature spends less time on attempting to define culture and focuses more on how to effectively interact and shape culture to achieve specific business goals. For example, business professor and negotiations trainer Stuart Diamond simply refers to culture as, “the affiliations from which individuals get their identity.”<sup>37</sup> Economist, sociologist, and politician Daniel Patrick Moynihan notes that, “the central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, which determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.”<sup>38</sup> Finally, economic strategist Michael Porter states that

attitudes, values, and beliefs that are sometimes collectively referred to as “culture” play an unquestioned role in human behavior and progress. However, the question is not whether culture has a role but how to understand this role in the context of the broader determinants of prosperity.<sup>39</sup>

This economic-based view of culture suggests that, if understood appropriately, culture could be leveraged to achieve a particular end state, thereby creating more prosperity in that area. More importantly these descriptions of culture show how powerful culture can be in a society, as it not only shapes peoples individual identities, but it can drive politics, progress, and prosperity.

Moreover, when examining culture and its role in world markets, business professor Michael Hinner takes a strictly economic approach to explaining culture:

Culture determines what products and services are considered essential, how one negotiates with them, how one uses them, what they signify, what they are thought to be worth, etc. That is why it is essential to

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<sup>37</sup> Stuart Diamond, *Getting More: How to Negotiate to Achieve Your Goals in the Real World* (New York, NY: Crown Business, 2010), 175.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington, eds. *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), xiv.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Porter, “Attitudes, Values, Beliefs, and the Microeconomics of Prosperity,” in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, eds. Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 14.

understand culture, in order to understand the principles of business. Essentially, business revolves around culture.<sup>40</sup>

Hinner's comments demonstrate that understanding culture can be the determining factor in the success or failure of a business. Likewise, a business' ability to identify and market to specific cultural demands may be key in setting it apart from its competitors.

Economist and anthropologist Robert Edgerton takes a cautious approach when dealing with culture. In quoting fellow economist Roy Ellen, Edgerton points out that, "cultural adaptations are seldom the best of all possible solutions and never entirely rational."<sup>41</sup> Edgerton further contends

It is mistaken to maintain, as many scholars do, that if a population has held to a traditional belief or practice for many years, then it must play a useful role in their lives. Traditional beliefs and practices may be useful, may even serve as important adaptive mechanisms, but they may also be inefficient, harmful, and even deadly.<sup>42</sup>

There may be many reasons not to adapt certain aspects of foreign culture to a specific mission. For example, Edgerton notes that culturally based non-rational decisions on "what type of crop to plant, or when to raid an enemy may be based on prophecies, dreams, and other supernatural phenomena."<sup>43</sup> Edgerton further describes, "one southern African kingdom was utterly destroyed when its cherished prophets urged that all its cattle be killed and no crops be planted. The result was predicted to be a millennium; instead, it was starvation, as a more rational system would have predicted."<sup>44</sup> In addition to being very difficult to do, attempting to change a culture could come with difficult to determine and dangerous second and third order effects. Finally, changing one's own culture or trying to adapt to the host culture could be construed as disingenuous and could result in its own set of unintended consequences.

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<sup>40</sup> Michael B. Hinner, *The Interface of Business and Culture* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang AG, 2010), 18.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Edgerton, "Traditional Beliefs and Practices—Are Some Better than Others?" in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, eds. Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 138.

<sup>42</sup> Edgerton, "Traditional Beliefs and Practices—Are Some Better than Others?," 131.

<sup>43</sup> Edgerton, "Traditional Beliefs and Practices—Are Some Better than Others?," 133.

<sup>44</sup> Edgerton, "Traditional Beliefs and Practices—Are Some Better than Others?," 133.



In exploring the success of McDonald's franchises in East Asia, James Watson describes culture as, "not something that people inherit as an undifferentiated bloc of knowledge from their ancestors, but is a set of ideas, reactions, and expectations that is constantly changing as people and groups themselves change."<sup>45</sup> Watson describes how culture is used "to capture the feeling of appropriateness, comfort, and correctness that govern the construction of personal preferences, or "tastes," and thereby make McDonald's successful in East Asia.<sup>46</sup> By balancing the different norms and traditions of the various regions and countries in East Asia, and a growing appeal for western culture, McDonald's franchises were able to "discern and appeal to customer needs."<sup>47</sup>

Many of these examples have direct applicability to SF operators. First, as with the business world, SF soldiers aim to leverage culture to support their various missions. A better understanding of the ways by which SF can comprehend and change culture for mission success is useful. Planning, tactics, and operations, can all be adjusted to leverage and work through the culture for change. Second, changing culture could come with unintended consequences. It is important, therefore, to at least attempt to understand the wider implications of attempting to change a group's culture. Third, understanding what aspects of a foreign culture should be adopted and what aspects of that culture should be influenced to change can have a significant impact on an SF mission or even a single line of operation within that mission. Finally, as demonstrated by numerous McDonald's franchises in East Asia, being able to identify and cater to key cultural aspects, while simultaneously promoting one's own values can yield success.

### **C. HOW DOES THE U.S. MILITARY DEFINE CULTURE?**

Similar to academia and business literature, the DOD and its subordinate components have a wide range of definitions for culture. The Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms sets the standard for

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<sup>45</sup> James L. Watson, *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>46</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 9.

<sup>47</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 14.

terminology for joint activity of the Armed Forces of the United States.<sup>48</sup> Despite the importance of JP 1–02 in coordinating terms across the DOD, the publication simply defines culture as, “a feature of the terrain that has been constructed by man. Included are such items as roads, buildings, and canals; boundary lines; and in a broad sense all names and legends on a map.”<sup>49</sup> This definition refers only to tangible objects created by a group, state, or region; it does not address intangible aspects of culture, such as values, informal norms, and rules, sources of leadership, and so on. Undoubtedly, this lack of clarity from the DOD increases the potential that each service component can define and ultimately understand culture differently.

In addition to JP 1–02, two influential and commonly applicable U.S. Army publications are the *Culture and Foreign Language Strategy* and The U.S. Army’s counterinsurgency manual, *FM 3–24 Counterinsurgency*. The *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy* defines culture as, “the set of distinctive features of a society or group, including but not limited to values, beliefs, and norms, that ties together members of that society or group and that drives action and behavior.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the U.S. Army’s counterinsurgency manual offers more detailed explanations of culture, including that culture itself is complementary to social structure. The two are mutually dependent and reinforcing; a change in one results in a change in the other.<sup>51</sup> The Army counterinsurgency manual further clarifies culture by describing it as a “web of meaning” shared by members of a particular society or group within a society.<sup>52</sup> Specifically, the Army counterinsurgency manual states that culture is:

- A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another.

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<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “JP 1-02,” *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2010), 91.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “JP 1-02,” introduction page. “JP 1-02” adds an asterisk to their definition, indicating further clarification may be available. However, that clarification is not provided by the DOD.

<sup>50</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2009), 84.

<sup>51</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), 3–6.

<sup>52</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3–6.

- Learned, though a process called enculturation.
- Shared by members of a society; there is no “culture of one.”
- Patterned, meaning that people in a society live and think in ways forming definite, repeating patterns.
- Changeable, through social interactions between people and groups.
- Arbitrary, meaning that Soldier and Marines should make no assumptions regarding what a society considers right and wrong, good and bad.
- Internalized, in the sense that it is habitual, taken for granted, and perceived as “natural” by people within the society.<sup>53</sup>

The U.S. Army COIN manual adds that

Culture could also be described as an “operational code” that is valid for an entire group of people; this observation corresponds to academic literature that describes culture as a motivating force. In other words, culture conditions the individual’s range of actions and ideas, including what to do and not do, how to do or not do it, and whom to do it with or not to do it with. Culture also includes under what circumstance the “rules” shift and change. Culture influences how people make judgments about what is right and wrong, assess what is important and unimportant, categorize things, and deal with things that do not fit into existing categories. Finally, cultural rules are flexible and proactive; they change according to time and circumstances.<sup>54</sup>

As an example of the diverging views of culture across the different service components, the Marine Corps, with its long history of counterinsurgency operations, understands that “culture is neither linear nor predictable and that Marines should not expect education in culture to provide easy solutions to military problems.”<sup>55</sup> This statement makes the important observation that culture is not moving in a linear fashion and that being a “cultural expert” may not be possible and even if one were an expert, it may not be sufficient when dealing with foreign cultures.

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<sup>53</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3–6, 3–7.

<sup>54</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3–6, 3–7.

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2008), 14.

#### **D. HOW DO THESE DEFINITIONS INFORM U.S. SF TRAINING IN CULTURE?**

While U.S. Special Forces have operated and worked closely with other cultures since their inception, the DOD as a whole may have only started to place a significant amount of importance on culture in the last decade. U.S. experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with other areas of operation, have alerted the military of the importance of culture at the tactical and operational levels. For example, Jiyul Kim of the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute, argues, "the Department of Defense's "cultural turn," in which emphasis is placed on culture as an important if not a decisive factor in countering insurgencies."<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps the most significant change in the U.S. military's focus on culture is the evolution of the Human Domain, the sixth domain of warfighting. A Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) study of the human domain points out that

the human domain is certainly nothing new. However, it has been largely under-analyzed and undervalued as a realm of warfare. Innovations in technology, specifically communications and transportation technologies, have connected people in new ways. Because of these advances in technology, and the various types of globalization they inspire, the human domain is now coming to the forefront as an analytically distinct realm of warfare.<sup>57</sup>

The study goes on to add, "more specifically, the human domain is comprised of humans, including humans as physical beings, human thought, emotion, human action, human collectives (such as groups), and what humans create."<sup>58</sup> The Human Domain is not new to Special Forces; it and other ARSOF forces have been specifically designed to work in the Human Domain since the 1950s. In fact, *ADRP 3-05* describes Army SOF as, "a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight

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<sup>56</sup> Jiyul Kim, *Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy*, Strategic Studies Institute, 2, accessed June 6, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/>.

<sup>57</sup> Heather S. Gregg et al., *The Human Domain: Military Objectives in the Sixth Domain of Warfighting* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2013), 3.

<sup>58</sup> Gregg et al., *The Human Domain*, 4.

alongside indigenous combat formations.”<sup>59</sup> USASOC asserts, “training venues must reflect an understanding of the influence of various cultures and actors present in potential operating environments including the use of cultural and language role players, in which to better prepare the trainees for the cultures they will encounter overseas.”<sup>60</sup>

USASOC continues to recognize that one of SF’s critical capabilities lie within its ability to conduct special warfare. *ARSOF 2022* defines special warfare as

the execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and non-lethal actions taken by specially trained and educated forces that have a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, subversion, sabotage and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain or hostile environment.<sup>61</sup>

USASOC adds that

special warfare soldiers should possess expertise in tactics, combat-adviser skills, military deception, sabotage and subversion, expertise in foreign language, relationship-building skills, cultural understanding, adaptive decision making and cognitive problem solving.<sup>62</sup>

This however, is not an exhaustive list of the skills and attributes that SF soldiers are expected to possess. Additionally, many of these skills and attributes may have a robust list of sub-tasks, which are required to be mastered prior to being considered proficient in the task. Remaining proficient in these skills can prove difficult when considering the amount of training time available to SF operators. Additionally, some of the aforementioned skills, such as relationship-building skills and cultural understanding may not always have a proficiency metric attached to that respective task.

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<sup>59</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3-05: Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 9.

<sup>60</sup> United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, “ARSOF 2022,” 5.

<sup>61</sup> United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, “ARSOF 2022,” 10.

<sup>62</sup> United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, “ARSOF 2022,” 11.

## E. CONCLUSION

USASOC underscores the importance of culture for the range of missions SF is supposed to perform, but does not clarify what the SOF operator should know and why. Building on academic and business literature, as well as military discussions on culture and the human domain, this thesis proposes the following approach to understanding culture for SF.

1. The SF Regiment would be best served by defining culture similar to the U.S. Army's counterinsurgency manual which defines culture as:  
  
"an "operational code" that is valid for an entire group of people; this observation corresponds to academic literature that describes culture as a motivating force. In other words, culture conditions the individual's range of actions and ideas, including what to do and not do, how to do or not do it, and whom to do it with or not to do it with."<sup>63</sup>
2. It is important for SF to discern not only what culture is, but also what it does. Specifically, culture shapes values and informal norms that govern society. Understanding these values and norms could present opportunities for leveraging culture for SF missions.
3. As noted in Marine Corps literature, being a culture expert, while extremely important, is not a panacea for dealing with foreign cultures. As demonstrated in this chapter, culture is extremely complicated and at times difficult to conceptualize. However, by applying a less complex definition of this intricate subject, SF operators will be able to move culture from the theoretical realm into the operational realm while effectively applying their understanding of culture.

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<sup>63</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3–6.

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### III. CURRENT U.S. TRAINING AND DOCTRINE IN CULTURE

As argued in the previous chapter, the importance of being culturally proficient cannot be understated for mission success in the military operations that the United States is currently facing. That importance can be amplified significantly throughout the conduct of most SF operations. By better understanding and being able to analyze culture, SF leadership can move forward with training geared toward the standards set by the DOD, the U.S. Army, and the USASOC.

This chapter investigates the expectations of the DOD, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and USASOC for cultural requirements for SF soldiers. Specifically, it considers the many requirements that a SF Operational Detachments-Alpha (ODA) must have against culture and language requirements. Rightfully, much is expected from SF regarding their mission readiness and operational competence. However, the current doctrine surrounding culture combined with the other required training tasks leave SF leadership little open space on their training schedule. Lack of training time combined with the lack of established measures of effectiveness to grade cultural proficiency makes it increasingly difficult for SF operators to satisfy the requirements placed on them by the higher commands.

Some of the DOD expectations for SF are described in the *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*. This publication is not directed specifically towards USASOC and its subordinate commands. However, it is important to examine where USASOC receives its direction regarding culture and how that direction is passed down to the tactical levels. The *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* notes that

post 9/11 military operations reinforce the reality that the Department of Defense needs a significantly improved organic, or in house, capability in emerging languages and dialects, a greater competence and regional area skill in those languages and dialects, and a surge capability to rapidly expand its language capabilities on short notice.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Department of the Army, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap*, 1.



While the *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* is focused on language, it suggests that language proficiency is important in gaining regional and cultural understanding. Language comprehension and language proficiency may play a significant role in building credibility with another culture, but foreign language proficiency does not directly correlate to cultural understanding. Additional skills are needed to analyze foreign cultures with the aim of building rapport. With a lack of clearly defined directives from the DOD, USASOC and its subordinate commands are left to determine the correct levels of proficiency needed for their tentative mission requirements. In many cases, ambiguous guidelines or directives are beneficial as the DOD may not fully understand the complexities that exist at the operational and tactical levels. However, without clear directives, the possibility remains that the DOD may have unrealistic expectations of the capabilities of USASOC and its subordinate SF operators.

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM or SOCOM) directs the way ahead for SOF in *SOCOM 2022: Forging the Tip of the Spear*:

USSOCOM must not only continue to pursue terrorist wherever we may find them, we must rebalance the force and tenaciously embrace indirect operations in the “*Human Domain*,” the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior in a population-centric conflict.<sup>65</sup>

SOCOM goes on to add, “the human domain is about developing understanding of, and nurturing influence among, critical populaces.”<sup>66</sup> SOCOM provides little guidance on how to train for success in the human domain or how to develop understanding, nurturing and influence among the populace. Yet, it is left up to the subordinate commands and the operational units to be prepared to fulfill the SOCOM commander’s vision as it is described in *SOCOM 2020*.

Additional doctrine at the Army level helps shape how operational units train to become culturally proficient. *FM 3–24, Counterinsurgency*, provides several points that can be used as training objectives. The Counterinsurgency (COIN) manual does not

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<sup>65</sup> United States Special Operations Command, *SOCOM 2020*, 2.

<sup>66</sup> United States Special Operations Command, *SOCOM 2020*, 3.

direct what type of training SF operators should conduct, however, the manual does spell out ways to be more successful when conducting counterinsurgency operations. According to *FM 3-24*, one of the keys to fighting an insurgency is understanding the local populace and gaining intelligence from that population. Intelligence in COIN operations is about people. U.S. forces must understand the people of the host nation, the insurgents, and the host nation government. Commanders and planners require insight into cultures, perceptions, values, beliefs, interests, and decision making processes of individuals and groups.<sup>67</sup>

The COIN manual goes on to add that knowledge of culture can provide a greater understanding of the society at large. “A society can be defined as a population whose members are subject to the same political authority, occupy a common territory, have a common culture, and share a sense of identity.”<sup>68</sup> Much like the definitions and descriptions of culture provided by the academic world, these descriptions from the COIN manual could help SF in defining what culture is and how to prepare SF operators to be culturally proficient. The COIN manual further clarifies that, “understanding the cultures and society in the area of operations allows counterinsurgents to achieve objectives and gain support.”<sup>69</sup> Finally, the COIN manual also addresses culture and its role in a counterinsurgency operational environment:

Culture forms the basis of how people interpret, understand, and respond to events and people around them. Cultural understanding is critical because who a society considers to be legitimate will often be determined by culture and norms. Additionally, counterinsurgency operations will likely be conducted as part of a multinational effort, and understanding the culture of allies and partners is equally critical.<sup>70</sup>

Throughout the COIN manual the importance of culture is stressed; however, it does not explain how to conduct training that will address cultural proficiency. By using the points laid out in the COIN manual, SF can help design their training programs to

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<sup>67</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3-1.

<sup>68</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3-4.

<sup>69</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3-4.

<sup>70</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3-1.

ensure that SF operators are prepared to address the cultural dynamics they encounter throughout their operations.

Much of the long-term guidance for all Army Special Operations and specifically Special Forces is published in *ARSOF 2022*. USASOC objective, stated in *ARSOF 2022*, declares that

USASOC will be able to provide joint-force commanders scalable nodes, with unmatched levels of tactical skill and language and cultural expertise, which establish persistent and distributed networks that provide the nation precise and nuanced asymmetric capability.<sup>71</sup>

Essentially, USASOC should be able to support fighting the enemies of the United States in whatever type of conflict that arises by providing the right number of operators who are experts at tactics, culture, and language. *ARSOF 2022* goes on to state that, “USASOC will field a diverse, regionally expert force with the world’s best trained and educated special operations Soldiers capable of addressing uncertainty.”<sup>72</sup> Once again, this regionally expert force must be able to address the cultural nuances that are present in their assigned areas of operations in order to meet the USASOC Commander’s intent and to be successful in their assigned missions.

Despite stating the goal that SF soldiers are to be culturally and linguistically proficient, *ARSOF 2022* offers little in the way of metrics for training and measuring proficiency of SF soldiers in cultural knowledge for mission success. Initial training for SF operators is conducted during the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC), commonly known as the Q course. The Q course is run by John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (JFKSWCS or SWCS). In addition to training SF operators, SWCS is the proponent for the training of other SOF elements, such as Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations (PSYOP). The stated vision of SWCS includes that “SWCS promotes life-long learning and transformation.”<sup>73</sup> SWCS’s website claims, “by using lessons learned from these battlefields, curriculum and doctrine can be amended in a

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<sup>71</sup> United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, “ARSOF 2022,” 9.

<sup>72</sup> United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, “ARSOF 2022,” 17.

<sup>73</sup> “JFKSWCS,” accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.soc.mil/SWCS/index.html>.

matter of weeks when gaps in training are identified.”<sup>74</sup> By remaining a flexible and ever-changing organization, SWCS is able to incorporate and react to the latest tactics, techniques and procedures from the world’s current conflicts.

In an attempt to meet the proficiency requirements directed by the USASOC Commander, described in *ARSOF 2022*, SWCS has retooled its cultural instruction for SF trainees. Led by the Special Warfare Education Group (Airborne), the Department of Regional Studies and Culture developed a course entitled “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence” (FC3), which was initiated in February 2014. The creators of FC3 claim, “This course is designed to provide students with a foundational, conceptual, and applied skill set that can be built upon to enhance their ability to contend in the human domain and continue the development of the 7th Warfighting Function (the Human Domain).”<sup>75</sup>

While the importance of cultural proficiency is stressed throughout the different phases of the Q course, FC3 is the only course dedicated solely to building the cultural proficiency of SF soldiers. The FC3 syllabus states that, “upon satisfactory completion of this course, students will recognize the significance of culture and integrate knowledge about the human domain into SOF operations.”<sup>76</sup> This 10-day, short segment of training is not intended to transform SF Operators into culture experts, but rather to heighten their overall awareness of culture and its importance in operations.

The course’s description goes on to argue, “The FC3 course focuses on enhancing students’ skill sets in applying cross cultural field skills including principles of persuasion, influence, and cross cultural communications.”<sup>77</sup> Additionally, “FC3 students will learn to view the operational environment through various “lenses,” adding versatility to their ability to forecast outcomes, make informed decisions, and maneuver

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<sup>74</sup> “JFKSWCS.”

<sup>75</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 1. Email to author, April 30, 2014.

<sup>76</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 1.

<sup>77</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 1.

within the human domain with increased precision.”<sup>78</sup> By not focusing on a single culture or a group of similar cultures from a specific region, SF trainees are taught how to be better decision makers, when culture is involved, instead of trying to create an operator that is an expert in a single culture.

Across the ten-day curriculum, students are exposed to a brief overview of culture in America, the importance of understanding culture and its components for the U.S. military, and how to apply cross cultural competence during their operational duties.<sup>79</sup> In an attempt to prepare the SF students better for dealing with foreign cultures,

the FC3 course asks the students to take and introspective look at their own culture and examine their own values, beliefs and behaviors. This instruction is intended to lay the ground work of self-awareness that is imperative to exceling in the challenging cross cultural settings SF, and other SOF soldiers, will face when they are deployed.<sup>80</sup>

Throughout the FC3 course, the instruction is introduced to the SF candidates through a combination of lecture, reading assignments, student produced essays, and practical exercises.<sup>81</sup> By establishing this cross cultural framework, SF operators are better prepared to address whatever culture they encounter in their area of responsibility (AOR).

During the FC3 course, the Department of Regional Studies and Culture also touches on the human domain. As discussed earlier, “the human domain is comprised of humans, including humans as physical beings, human thought, emotion, human action, human collectives (such as groups), and what humans create.”<sup>82</sup> The course examines “the various ways that the human domain has been defined and explained in the military context while specifically focusing on lieutenant general (LTG) Cleveland’s (USASOC

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<sup>78</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 1.

<sup>79</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 1.

<sup>80</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 1.

<sup>81</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 1.

<sup>82</sup> Gregg et al., *The Human Domain*, 4.

Commander) guidance on this emerging domain.”<sup>83</sup> The Department of Regional Studies and Culture recognizes that “much of the SF mission relies on the ability of soldiers to interpret the human domain and work effectively with foreign national counterparts and local nationals while applying cross cultural field skills.”<sup>84</sup> Much like the topic of culture, the human domain is very broad and complex. However, by introducing the human domain and the role of SF operators working within it, the FC3 course prepares SF trainees for not only what they will encounter during the remaining phases of the Q course, but for situations they may find themselves in later as an SF operator. The course syllabus is summarized in Table 1.<sup>85</sup>

Table 1. FC3 Syllabus

<b>CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS</b>
<b>Operational Relevance</b>
<p><b>Lesson Description:</b>  This lesson focuses on detailing the operational need for understanding culture and its components. This class will cover an introduction to FC3 with selected videos and readings to highlight the spectrum of cross cultural competency in a military environment. At the conclusion of this class, students will understand the range of “cultural competency” and how knowledge of culture or lack thereof, can effect SOF operations.</p>
<p>Readings:  Kahneman, Daniel. <i>Thinking Fast and Slow</i>. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011.</p>
<b>Defining Culture</b>
<p><b>Lesson Description:</b>  This lesson focuses on foundational concepts of culture, which will be explored in the context of American society. Students are asked to take an introspective look at their own culture and examine their own values, beliefs and behaviors. This lesson will lay the ground work of self-awareness that is imperative to excelling in the challenging cross cultural settings SOF soldiers will be deployed.</p>

<sup>83</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 5–6.

<sup>84</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 8.

<sup>85</sup> USAJFKSWCS, SWEG(A), Department of Regional Studies and Culture, “Foundations of Cross Cultural Competence (FC3) Syllabus,” 3–9.

Readings:

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Culture* (1973).

Plous, S. (2003). The psychology of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination: An overview. In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gehlback, H., Brinkworth, M.E., & Wang, M. (2012). The social perspective taking process: What motivates individuals to take another's perspective? *Teachers College Record*.

Dunne, Jonathan P. MAJ, USMC, "Maslow is Non-Deployable: Modifying Maslow's Hierarchy for Contemporary Counterinsurgency," in *Applications in Operational Culture*.

Bargh, John A., "Our Unconscious Mind" in *Scientific American*, Volume 310, Number 1, January 2014.

### **The Complexity of Culture**

#### **Lesson Description:**

In this lesson students will start to take a critical look at how they view others and how others view them. We will discuss concepts pertinent to the formation of our own culture, as well as the formation of our perceptions towards others, such as ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, stereotypes, biases and worldview.

Readings:

ARSOF 2022, *Special Warfare*, Vol. 26, Issue 2, April—June 2013. Greitens, Eric. "Kenya" Chapter 14, *The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, the Making of a Navy SEAL*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.

*The Future of Special Operations*, Linda Robinson, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2012.

*Human Domain Operations: Institutionalizing Eat Soup*, Ruben Stewart, *Small Wars Journal*, 29 October 2013.

*Strategic Landpower Task Force*, GEN James Amos, ADM William McRaven, and GEN Raymond Odierno, white paper, May 2013.

*Toward Strategic Landpower*, LTG Charles T. Cleveland and LTC Stuart L. Farris, ARMY, July 20.

*The Force of Tomorrow*, GEN Ray Odierno, *Foreign Policy*, 4 February 2013.  
[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/02/04/the\\_force\\_of\\_tomorrow?](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/02/04/the_force_of_tomorrow?)

*"After '10 Years of Abject Failure,' Army, SOCOM, Marine Leaders Focus on 'Strategic Landpower,'" Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., Breaking Defense, 27 August 2013, <http://breakingdefense.com/2013/08/27/10-years-of-abject-failure-army-socom-marine-leaders-focus-on-strategic-landpower/>.*

*McRaven: Success in Human Domain Fundamental to Special Ops, Claudette Roulo, American Forces Press Service, Defense.gov News Article, 5 June 2013.*

*"U.S. Land Forces Highlight Their Importance Through 'Human Domain' Interaction," Paul McLeary, Defense News, 14 May 2013, [www.defensenews.com/article/20130514/DEFREG02/305140014/US-Land-Forces-Highlight-Their-Importance-Through-Human-Domain-Interaction](http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130514/DEFREG02/305140014/US-Land-Forces-Highlight-Their-Importance-Through-Human-Domain-Interaction)*

### **The Role of Culture in the Human Domain**

#### **Lesson Description:**

This lesson focuses on the role of culture in the Human Domain. We will examine the various ways "Human Domain" has been defined and explained in the military context. We will specifically focus on LTG Cleveland's guidance on this emerging domain.

#### **Readings:**

*The Interpretation of Culture, Clifford Geertz.*

*Understanding Corruption, Lawrence Rosen, The American Interest Magazine, Spring 2010. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/pdf/v5/n4/Rosen.pdf>.*

#### **Listen:**

*Taken by the Taliban: A Doctor's Story of Captivity, Rescue, NPR.*

#### **Readings:**

*Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches; the Riddles of Culture, Marvin Harris, Prologue and Chapter 1 "Mother Cow."*

*The Interpretation of Culture, Clifford Geertz, Ch 5, "Ethos, Worldview, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,"*

### **Perspective Taking**

#### **Lesson Description:**

In this class, students will learn to view situations through various "lenses," taking into account cultural contexts. The class will center on discussion generated from viewing a portion of the documentary film "The Lost Boys of Sudan." Student's will be asked to identify various cultural concepts covered in previous lessons, as well as think critically about the values, behaviors and norms of the two main characters in the film and determine a strategy for how they would work with them.

#### **Readings:**

Ambady, N., LaPlante, D., Nguyen, T., Rosenthal, R., Chaumeton, N., & Levinson, W. (2002). Surgeons' tone of voice: A clue to malpractice history. *Surgery*



<p><i>Applying Anthropological Knowledge</i>, Aaron Podolefsky, in <i>Thinking Anthropologically: A Practical Guide for Students</i>, third edition, Philip Carl Salzman and Patricia C. Rice. Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2011.</p>
<p><b>Cross Cultural Communication</b></p>
<p><b>Lesson Description:</b>  A successful cross cultural communicator can recognize differences in communication styles, detect understanding, and resolve misunderstanding. Upon completion of this section students will understand the complexities of interpersonal communication and how to apply interpersonal communication strategies when communicating with people outside of the student's culture.</p> <p>Readings:  <i>What to Ask After Years of Denials</i>, Juliet Macur, <i>New York Times</i>, 16 January, 2013.</p> <p><i>Applying Anthropological Knowledge</i>, Aaron Podolefsky, in <i>Thinking Anthropologically: A Practical Guide for Students</i>, third edition, Philip Carl Salzman and Patricia C. Rice. Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2011.</p> <p><i>How journalists can work well with interpreters during interviews</i>, Laura Shin. Poynter. 13 November 2012, <a href="http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/194999/how-journalists-work-well-with-interpretors-when-reporting-stories/">http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/194999/how-journalists-work-well-with-interpretors-when-reporting-stories/</a>.</p> <p><i>Learning from Stories: Narrative Interviewing in Cross-Cultural Research</i>, Cheryle Mattingly and Mary Lawlor, Department of Occupational Science &amp; Occupational Therapy, Department of Anthropology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA. National Institute of Health Public Access.  <a href="http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3051197/">http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3051197/</a>.</p> <p><i>The Interpretation of Culture</i>, Clifford Geertz</p>
<p><b>Applied Cross Cultural Field Skills</b></p>
<p><b>Lesson Description:</b>  Much of the SOF mission relies on the ability of soldiers to interpret the human domain and work effectively with foreign nationals, counterparts and local nationals. This class will introduce applied skills and techniques for working with interpreters, interviewing and having purposeful conversations with locals. We will also introduce a framework for managing the iterative process of learning about and understanding the human terrain. Students will be given an opportunity to practice their conversation techniques while utilizing an interpreter during a practical exercise.</p>
<p><b>Persuasion and Influence</b></p>
<p><b>Lesson Description:</b>  This block of instruction explores techniques for persuasion, influence, and negotiation in cross cultural environments. The lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) require that Soldiers at all levels of command</p>

participate as U.S. Military Representatives in meetings and negotiations with coalition partners, local leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other U.S. government agencies (OGAs). Understanding concepts, such as branding, priming and predictable dialogue, as well as listening and conversation techniques will enable the Solider to be more effective in their cross cultural interactions.

#### **FINAL EXERCISE**

##### **Lesson Description:**

The final day of FC3 will be comprised of a final exercise and an after action review. Students will complete a practical exercise based on partial role playing scenario IOT demonstrate group and individual lessons learned from the preceding Culture classes. Given situation and objectives, each group will perform as either Insiders or Outsiders of a fictitious culture/community. Students will demonstrate (individually and in groups) the understanding of concepts and the proper utilization of skills needed in order to understand and analyze the components of a foreign culture as it relates to SOF operations.

The FC3 course is admirable, as it takes a short but valuable 10 days of training to prepare SF students for some of the cultural interactions they may face during their real world operations. The addition of the FC3 course to the already crowded SF training pipeline signifies that the SF Regiment has recognized the importance of cultural understanding in its current and future missions, and has initiated training to better prepare SF operators to address culture.

However, despite the promise of the FC3 course it does not, by design, prepare SF operators to be regional experts of a single culture in their respective area of responsibility. The FC3 course is merely a foundation for the understandings of culture and its significance in the human domain. By building this strong understanding of the impact culture can have on operations and the outcomes of operations, the FC3 course is preparing SF operators to be able to avoid cultural missteps, if not utilize culture to their advantage. Complemented with detailed pre-deployment training on area specific cultures, assuming there is time for this training, SF operators may be better prepared to operate in any area of the world.

The final qualification requirement for SF operators in the Q course is a training event known as ROBIN SAGE, as described by USASOC in a press release:

ROBIN SAGE is the U.S. military's premier unconventional warfare exercise and the final test of over a year's worth of training for aspiring Special Forces Soldiers. Candidates are placed in an environment of political instability characterized by armed conflict, forcing Soldiers to analyze and solve problems to meet the challenges of this "real-world" training.<sup>86</sup>

USASOC adds that during ROBIN SAGE, SF trainees "must infiltrate areas in small groups and train guerilla forces to independently and effectively use tactical force to liberate the notional country of Pineland by teaching them to communicate, move, fight and provide medical aid."<sup>87</sup> To add to the realism of the event, "the exercise's notional country of Pineland encompasses 15 counties in North Carolina. Throughout the exercise, SF trainees and ROBIN SAGE role-players not only conduct training missions, such as controlled assaults and key-leader engagements, but also live, eat and sleep in these civilian areas."<sup>88</sup> By incorporating entire communities into the exercise, ROBIN SAGE is able to replicate an immersion into another country and its culture.

During ROBIN SAGE, SF trainees not only apply the skills they have learned during their time in the Q course, but they continue to refine their "rapport-building skills, how to organize clandestine guerrilla groups, and explore the strange nature of unconventional war."<sup>89</sup> SF officer Tony Schwalm continues:

Green Berets get to know the people of other countries where we train (and fight) and do so intimately. Their goal is to ensure legitimacy and win rapport among people that our military is unaccustomed to worrying about very much. Success in pursuing U.S. interests anywhere in the world can be measured along these lines. When SF operators have legitimacy and rapport with the locals, the operators can walk freely without body armor among the people and rip the very heart out of the enemy's ability to operate there. Legitimacy brings intimacy, and intimacy brings understanding and victory.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> "SOC: Robin Sage Exercise to Run Nov. 11-27," accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.soc.mil/UNS/Releases/2013/November/131105-02.html>.

<sup>87</sup> "SOC: Robin Sage Exercise to Run Nov. 11-27."

<sup>88</sup> "SOC: Robin Sage Exercise to Run Nov. 11-27."

<sup>89</sup> Tony Schwalm, *The Guerrilla Factory: The Making of Special Forces Officers, The Green Berets* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2012), 57.

<sup>90</sup> Schwalm, *The Guerrilla Factory*, 7.

For SF trainees and future operators, ROBIN SAGE provides a final block of collective culture training prior to being assigned to an operational unit. Although the course is not designed to focus solely on culture, a cultural misstep during ROBIN SAGE can quickly be magnified and result in mission failure and a trainee not completing the Q course. Undoubtedly, ROBIN SAGE is an exceptional course that culminates over a year's worth of tactical, language, and cultural training into one event. For most SF soldiers, however, ROBIN SAGE is the last exercise in which they test their cultural proficiency in a training scenario. As prescribed by the Army Training Network (ATN) and the Combined Arms Training Strategies (CATS), an ODA has up to 30 collective tasks in which its members must remain proficient.<sup>91</sup> Some of these collective tasks, such as the situational training exercise for conducting a direct action mission, require 72 hours of testing or practical exercise to demonstrate proficiency.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, to add to the complexity of training for a direct action mission, an ODA must be able to first successfully complete 11 less intensive collective tasks.<sup>93</sup> In other words, a collective task as complex as conducting a direct action mission requires weeks of individual and collective training in addition to requiring sustainment training to remain proficient in that skill.

*USASOC Regulation 350–1* directs that each ODA and its operators be proficient in the following skills.

Table 2. ODA Required Skills

<b>ODA Advance Skill Requirements Skill</b>	<b>Number Per ODA</b>
Jump Master	3 EA
Free Fall Jump Master (MFF ODA)	3 EA
Dive Supervisor (UWO ODA)	2 EA

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<sup>91</sup> "ATN," accessed May 5, 2014, [https://atn.army.mil/dsp\\_CATSreport.aspx?rptid=11501f11-1fb1-47a4-af9a-3b3b06f29932](https://atn.army.mil/dsp_CATSreport.aspx?rptid=11501f11-1fb1-47a4-af9a-3b3b06f29932).

<sup>92</sup> "ATN," 71.

<sup>93</sup> "ATN," 71.

<b>ODA Advance Skill Requirements Skill</b>	<b>Number Per ODA</b>
Dive Medical Tech (UWO ODA)	2 EA
SF Sniper Course (Level I)	1 EA
SF Sniper Course (Level II)	1 EA
Advanced Special Ops (Level III)	2 EA
Advanced Special Ops (Level II)	6 EA
Special Technical Electronic Equipment (STEE)	1 EA per SFG(A)
SF Advanced Urban Combat	ALL
Joint Tactical Air Controller	1 EA
Joint Fires Observer	2 EA
Small Unmanned Aircraft System Operator	2 EA
SOF Sensitive Site Exploitation (Operator Basic)	ALL
SOF Sensitive Site Exploitation (Operator Advance)	2 EA
Mountain (Level I) (MTN ODAs only)	2 EA
Mountain (Level II) (MTN ODAs only)	4 EA
Mountain (Level III) (MTN ODAs only)	6 EA
Ammo/HAZMAT (Hazardous Material)	1 EA <sup>94</sup>

These are the necessary skills required to be proficient and retain readiness for contingent missions that fall in the scope of the SF core mission set. From this 350–I list, for example, advanced special ops LVL III requires 14 weeks of intensive training to

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<sup>94</sup> USASOC, *USASFC(A)Regulation 350-1.20* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013), 37–41.

complete and the SF sniper course requires eight weeks to complete.<sup>95</sup> In order to become compliant with the United States Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) Regulation for just two of the required proficiencies, an ODA would lose three of their operators for a total of 36 weeks. After realizing the level of training required to ensure that SF operators remain proficient in their directed missions and common core skills, SF leadership is faced with the task of balancing training requirements with limited training time.

Alongside these many requirements for training and proficiency within an SF ODA, culture and language training are also mandated. Multiple cultures and languages typically exist in a single SF Group's area of responsibility, presenting considerable challenges in meeting the stated goal of language and cultural expertise. For example, a SF operator in 7th Special Forces Group, Airborne (SFG(A)), which has the geographic responsibility of Latin America, including the Caribbean, may be expected to be an expert in the countless cultures that make up the 32 countries in their area of responsibility.<sup>96</sup> The Caribbean and Latin America have at least 129 different languages.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the number of cultures is virtually unknown. Given the difficulty of defining culture and training for language and cultural proficiency in just this one AOR, the goal of SF operators being an expert in the language and culture of their AOR is resoundingly difficult.

After identifying the directives laid out by the DOD, the U.S. Army, and USASOC, the commanders are faced with a daunting task of ensuring the preparedness of their units to conduct the operations with which they are tasked. Clearly, preparation for each mission is unique to the objective of that mission and the tasks required to be conducted to achieve that objective. However, some level of understanding of the cultures within the AOR would contribute to mission success; therefore, training for those cultures should be part of the mission preparation. The challenge becomes meeting

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<sup>95</sup> USAJFKSWCS, *Academic Handbook: Academic Year 2013–2014* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013), 40.

<sup>96</sup> "Center for Army Lessons Learned," accessed May 5, 2014, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/thesaurus/toc.asp?id=596>.

<sup>97</sup> "AILLA," accessed June 9, 2014, [http://www.ailla.utexas.org/site/lg\\_about.html](http://www.ailla.utexas.org/site/lg_about.html).

all of the requirements laid out for an SF ODA—including language and culture proficiency—given limited time and diversity in geographic regions and missions.

Furthermore, in addition to meeting the basic requirements for language and culture proficiency, additional language and culture training for SF operators is not mandated after their completion of the qualification course; this training is expected to be conducted by individual operators in order to remain proficient in both fields. Language ratings of individual SF operators are required by USASFC to be updated annually. Yet without a measure of effectiveness or proficiency, or even a target culture to study, individual operators and their detachments are charged with being culturally proficient in whatever area of the world they may find themselves conducting operations.

Without metrics to gauge cultural proficiency, or even a single established culture in which to remain proficient, operators are left trying to become familiar with cultural generalities from across their assigned AOR. Furthermore, mandatory training for their other assigned tasks forces operators to learn cultural generalities just prior to their deployment. In even worse scenarios, operators are forced to learn the culture of an area after they arrive, which could lead to cultural *faux pas* and a loss of rapport or even the support of a host nation counterpart.

Chapter IV offers three case-study vignettes on historical examples, both positive and negative, of U.S. military operations where knowing the culture of the target groups was paramount for mission success. These case studies demonstrate both the successes and failures that come from the critical variable of cultural knowledge.

#### **IV. THE OSS, MITT TEAMS AND MCDONALDS IN EAST ASIA: THREE CASE STUDIES OF CULTURE AND OPERATIONS**

This chapter considers three case studies where cultural awareness, or lack thereof, has had an effect on operations: the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in World War II, in which U.S. operatives were dropped behind enemy lines in both the European and Pacific theaters with the goal of aiding local resistance, the creation of Military Transition Teams (MiTT) in Iraq and Afghanistan,<sup>98</sup> with the aim of training local forces, and the development of McDonalds restaurants in East Asia. By looking at historical examples outside of SF of both military units operating overseas and international businesses, some important lessons remain applicable when preparing current and future SF operators to be culturally proficient.

This chapter finds that both the OSS in World War II (WWII) and McDonald's restaurants have enjoyed a considerable amount of success in their overseas operations. This success can be attributed to their heightened level of cultural awareness, their cultural flexibility, and their overall level cross of cultural competence. Conversely, the success of MiTT in Iraq and Afghanistan was limited, due to the lack of cultural proficiency possessed by the teams along with poor selection criteria and overall lack of time to train for the mission. Throughout the examination of all three cases, it is clear that no organization of outsiders can be completely culturally proficient in another's culture. However, pre-exposure to a culture, a heightened level of cultural awareness, a willingness to incorporate local norms, and cross cultural competence are important to the level of success of that organization.

##### **A. OSS**

The OSS was particularly successful in organizing and directing partisan forces and conducting subversion and sabotage operations in WWII. Their high level of success

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<sup>98</sup> There have been several versions of Military Transition Teams responsible for training and advising Afghan and Iraqi forces during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, including embedded training teams (ETTs) and others. In order to limit the use of acronyms, all training teams in this thesis will be referred to as MiTT.



is partially attributed to the cultural proficiency possessed by OSS operators. The OSS recognized that it was much more expedient to recruit an individual who already possessed cultural knowledge and language proficiency from the area of the world in which they would serve and train,<sup>99</sup> rather than attempt to train a military member in a foreign language and culture from scratch. The U.S. Government took advantage of its nation of immigrants to build its culturally and linguistically proficient forces. Although the term “cross cultural competency” is relatively new, the principles of the definition are applicable to the OSS recruits and later to the OSS operatives. Jessica Ternley, of the Joint Special Operations University, defines cross cultural competency as, “the ability to quickly learn to operate efficiently in any culture, and culture-specific or regional knowledge that equips one to behave appropriately in a particular culture.”<sup>100</sup>

Prior to joining the fight against the Axis Powers in WWII, the U.S. government was taking actions to standup a covert organization. Richard Smith, a historian of the OSS notes, “Five months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor precipitated America’s entry into the World War, Franklin Roosevelt christened a mysterious addition to this new Deal alphabet bureaucracy, called the COI, and was headed by Bill Donovan.”<sup>101</sup> Smith added that less than a year later, Donovan’s organization was renamed the OSS and was “given an ambiguous mandate to plan and operate such special services as may be directed by the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff.”<sup>102</sup> OSS records show that the mission of the OSS was twofold. First, the OSS was to “set up research units and an elaborate network of agents to gather strategic information concerning the activities and vulnerabilities of the nation’s enemies, to analyze and evaluate this information, and to report it to those concerned.”<sup>103</sup> Second, the OSS was to “conduct a multiplicity of destructive operations behind enemy lines, to aid and train resistance

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<sup>99</sup> JSOU and OSS Society Symposium, *Irregular Warfare and the OSS Model* (Hurlburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2009), 14.

<sup>100</sup> Jessica Turnley, *Cross-Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF Are the Way SOF Are* (Hurlburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2011), 2–3.

<sup>101</sup> Smith, *OSS*, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Smith, *OSS*, 2.

<sup>103</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men: Selection of Personnel for the Office Strategic Services* (New York, NY: Rinehart and Company, 1958), 10.

groups, and, by radio, pamphlets, and other means, to disintegrate the morale of enemy troops and encourage the forces of the underground.”<sup>104</sup>

Historian John Whiteclay Chambers II claims that in an effort to further organize a popular resistance, “the OSS engaged in new forms of warfare for the United States: centralized intelligence, “fifth column” activities [subversion from within an enemy’s territory], psychological or “political warfare,” and the kind of sabotage, commando raids and directed guerrilla activity now known as irregular warfare.”<sup>105</sup> The OSS recognized that to gain greater access to the indigenous population, knowledge of the local language and culture would be critical. This recognition helped focus the OSS’ assessment and selection efforts.

By recruiting from the most capable candidates from within the population, the OSS began to reflect the cultural diversity present in the United States. Smith notes that German reports regarding the makeup of the OSS noted, “altogether they represent a perfect picture of the mixture of races and characters in that savage conglomeration called the United States of America, and anyone who observes them can well judge the state of mind and instability that must be prevalent in their country today.”<sup>106</sup> Smith adds that German reports also reflect their assessment of the OSS and its cultural diversity; “We can only congratulate ourselves that this group of enemy agents will give us no trouble.”<sup>107</sup> In spite of German arrogance, the OSS and its diverse cadre of operatives was able to gain access to their target population across occupied European and Asian theaters.

In particular, the United States capitalized on its immigrant population, who could draw from their experiences with the indigenous population and their cultures. In

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<sup>104</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 10.

<sup>105</sup> John Whiteclay Chambers II, “Training for War and Espionage: Office of Strategic Services Training During World War II,” *Studies in Intelligence* 54, no. 2 (June 2010): 1–2, accessed August 24, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol.-54-no.-2/pdfs-vol.-54-no.-2/Chambers-OSS%20Training%20in%20WWII-with%20notes-web-19Jun.pdf>.

<sup>106</sup> Smith, *OSS*, 39.

<sup>107</sup> Smith, *OSS*, 39.

addition, the OSS looked for people who could gain access and placement within the indigenous population. The OSS tapped veterans of the Spanish Civil War, cliques of anti-Bolshevik Russian émigrés, some of them descendants of the fallen nobility.<sup>108</sup> The OSS employed former Polish Czarist Army officers, French born and educated American business executives, and other French-Americans who were experts in French culture, such as university professors who taught French.<sup>109</sup> Smith points out that the OSS also recruited

men and women from the ranks of socialist groups, such as the Jewish Agency Executive, the International Transport Workers Federation, and the International Federation of Trade Unions. In Asia, many officers had a missionary background and were instilled with a family tradition of evangelical support for social reform.<sup>110</sup>

This mixture of recent male and female immigrants was able to interact with their own countrymen in ways that non-native speakers and culturists could not.<sup>111</sup> Documents from the OSS assessment staff claim reflect this following assumption:

Many foreigners and first-generation Americans were recruited because they were familiar with the language, people, and territory of their respective lands of origin. Farmers machine workers, salesmen, stockholders, explorers, chemists, diplomats, physicians, philosophers, congressmen, and theologians.<sup>112</sup>

Chambers points out that to gain access to these diverse cultural groups with the United States

OSS Personnel Procurement Branch scoured training camps and advanced schools of all services looking for intelligent candidates knowledgeable in a foreign language who were willing to volunteer for unspecified challenging and hazardous duty behind enemy lines.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Smith, *OSS*, 11, 16.

<sup>109</sup> Smith, *OSS*, 41, 59.

<sup>110</sup> Smith, *OSS*, 30.

<sup>111</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 11.

<sup>112</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 11.

<sup>113</sup> Chambers II, "Training for War and Espionage," 12.

A look at OSS records of one group of recruits slated for Far East service, which consisted of ninety candidates, demonstrates the diversity of which the OSS tried to field. Twelve of the 90 recruits were from America and were of an eastern race or nationality. Only “thirty-seven of the recruits spoke English; the rest spoke a variety of other languages, including French, Chinese (11 different dialects), Thai, Japanese, and Arabic.”<sup>114</sup> As reports from the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) and the OSS Society Symposium put it, “The mission was to select foreign-language-speaking Army personnel and train them to operate as military units in enemy or enemy-held territories.”<sup>115</sup>

Despite its reliance on émigrés with language and cultural skills, recruits to the OSS did receive both cultural and military training. However, the OSS looked to recruit the most culturally competent and language proficient candidates prior to training, in order to limit the amount of emphasis and time needed to ensure that recruit was culturally proficient. Notes from the JSOU and the OSS Society Symposium state that

prospective personnel were selected based on language and cultural awareness for the area in which they would be operating. They later underwent a 6-week training period where they focused on small unit tactics, field craft, weapons, vehicle operations, espionage, and organizing and training guerrilla forces.<sup>116</sup>

With such an abbreviated training period, the OSS cadre of recruiters focused on only select groups of candidates. “Recruits were to speak the language and know the culture of the region in which they would operate, to help gain the trust of the indigenous populations.”<sup>117</sup> Recognizing that it may not be possible to create truly culturally proficient operatives in a limited time, focused recruiting enabled the OSS cadre to field a sufficient force.

Although native language and cultural skills were sought out, candidates were not automatically qualified to be an OSS operative. As OSS records show, the OSS stressed

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<sup>114</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 362.

<sup>115</sup> JSOU and OSS Society Symposium, *Irregular Warfare and the OSS Model*, 13.

<sup>116</sup> JSOU and OSS Society Symposium, *Irregular Warfare and the OSS Model*, 14.

<sup>117</sup> JSOU and OSS Society Symposium, *Irregular Warfare and the OSS Model*, 19.

common sense over cultural knowledge: “We simply must have men [sic] who can shoulder responsibility and use initiative with common sense. Simply because a man has intelligence does not qualify him for this type of work.”<sup>118</sup> The OSS candidates were trained in their respective jobs, such as propagandist; however, if they were not able to demonstrate cultural sensitivity, they were not considered a viable candidate. An OSS Assessment Staff document claims: “The assumption was that if a candidate was not sensitive to cultural differences, he would have little success as a propagandist no matter how great his writing skill, his proficiency in the graphic arts, or his administrative ability.”<sup>119</sup> A lack of cross cultural competence was more important than the possession of certain technical skills.

OSS candidates were tested in the field prior to deploying. For example, candidates for the pacific campaign were sent to Kandy, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) prior to deployment. An OSS assessment staff document claims the following:

This part of the world, a land of many peoples of contrasting cultures, languages, and habits, and of attitudes strangely different from our own; a part of the world where each of the many racial, religious, and national groups understood little about the others, and distrusted or hated them from reasons that sometimes go back far into the past.<sup>120</sup>

Following Ceylon, OSS candidates were moved to India and then on to several different areas in China.<sup>121</sup> OSS assessment staff documents state, “With each transplantation [sic] came the problems of cultural differences and unfathomable motivations. With the changes in cultures and nationalities came the changes in languages and dialects.”<sup>122</sup> Additionally, the overseas training, which immersed candidates in foreign cultures other than the ones they knew, forced the OSS agents to recognize that there were limitations to the degree that an outsider can gain access with an indigenous group. Chambers points out as OSS agents recognized their limitations,

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<sup>118</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 13.

<sup>119</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 122.

<sup>120</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 350.

<sup>121</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 350.

<sup>122</sup> The OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men*, 350.

“the number of OSS personnel overseas increased dramatically as they sought to train indigenous agents, the overseas detachments established their own training schools.”<sup>123</sup> Chambers added that while the training was fast paced and aggressive, “the best training, it was believed, gave already talented, independent individuals the skills, concepts and confidence to be adaptable leaders in an unpredictable environment.”<sup>124</sup>

Tangible results were available almost immediately after the fielding of OSS operatives, specifically in improved intelligence and connections with resistance movements behind enemy lines. Historian Richard Smith claims, “Within weeks, Murphy’s amateur spies were flooding Washington with valuable reports on all significant military and political developments in the colonies.”<sup>125</sup> Through the cultural similarities shared with the local population, including culture and language, OSS operatives quickly built rapport and networks to support their operations.<sup>126</sup> Throughout the war, this shared interdependence continued to produce results. Chambers claims, “By the end of the war, the OSS’s program of selection, evaluation, and training, and equally if not more important its successes overseas showed the importance of obtaining the right individuals and giving them the skills, equipment, and confidence to do the job.”<sup>127</sup>

The OSS training pipeline was fast-paced and aggressive, yet it was condensed when compared to the training pipeline that modern SF operators undergo today. The need for less training can be attributed to the fact that the OSS specifically recruited individuals with skill sets appropriate for the jobs that they would conduct, specifically language and cultural skills. While the OSS focused their recruiting efforts on personnel that possessed a high degree of cultural and language proficiency, they also realized that there were limitations on the access an outsider can gain with an indigenous group. In these cases, the possession of certain technical skills was more important than language or cultural proficiency.

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<sup>123</sup> Chambers II, “Training for War and Espionage,” 12.

<sup>124</sup> Chambers II, “Training for War and Espionage,” 11.

<sup>125</sup> Smith, *OSS*, 39.

<sup>126</sup> JSOU and OSS Society Symposium, *Irregular Warfare and the OSS Model*, 6.

<sup>127</sup> Chambers II, “Training for War and Espionage,” 16.

## B. MITT

Military Transition Teams were created to build and train security forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. The first MiTTs were deployed in Iraq in mid-2004.<sup>128</sup> During the course of both wars, MiTTs contributed significantly to the coalition effort of training an estimated 600,000 indigenous troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>129</sup> Despite these impressive numbers, their overall success is questionable, particularly in light of the recent invasion of Islamic State in Iraq and Levant advances into Iraq and the crumbling of Iraqi security forces virtually overnight.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, after action reports (AARs) and lessons learned from the employment of MiTTs indicate that, in many cases, the teams were woefully underprepared and inadequately trained to conduct their assigned advisor missions. Many of these AAR comments suggest that MiTTs were not trained to understand the cultural nuances they would face during their deployments.

Strategies in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars called for the DOD to conduct Security Force Assistance (SFA) as a means of building indigenous security forces that could fight their own insurgencies and help stabilize their countries, allowing U.S. forces to withdrawal. Marine Officer Joseph Jones points out that

the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq 2005* articulates the plan to develop the Armed forces of Iraq in order to provide security for the country. Along the “Security Track” the document states that “the training, equipping, and mentoring of Iraqi Security Forces will produce an Army and police force capable of independently providing security and maintaining public order in Iraq.”<sup>131</sup>

More specifically, Fox and Stowell describe the MiTT mission as follows:

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<sup>128</sup> Daniel P. Balger, “So You Want to Be an Advisor,” in *CALL Newsletter, Advisor: Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures* no. 07–28 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2007), 56.

<sup>129</sup> Sam Jones and Borzou Daragahi, “Iraqi’s Security Forces Ill Equipped to Face Militants,” *ft.com*, accessed October 6, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a089e41e-081c-11e4-9afc-00144feab7de.html#axzz3FP9VbWub>; Jim White, “Progress” Report: ANSF Abandoning over One Third of ISAF Facilities,” *Empty Wheel*, accessed October 6, 2014, <http://www.emptywheel.net/tag/afghan-national-security-forces/>.

<sup>130</sup> Bill Roggio, “Islamic State Routes Iraqi Armored Column in Anbar,” *Long War Journal*, accessed October 6, 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/07/islamic\\_state\\_routes.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/07/islamic_state_routes.php).

<sup>131</sup> Joseph Jones, *Advisor 2.0: Advancing the Military Transition Team Model* (Quantico, VA: United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2008), 1.

After rapidly defeating the militaries and national command structures of Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. was faced with the complex task of rebuilding not only the military forces, but also police and border security forces in both countries. Services quickly formed, trained, and deployed teams of advisors—initially and primarily comprised of reserve forces personnel. These Military Training teams (MiTTs) were trained at multiple locations, by multiple trainers, with different results in the quality of training.<sup>132</sup>

Additionally, other problems with the MiTTs surfaced. Fox and Stowell claim, “Additional advisor teams were formed “out of hide” from units already deployed.”<sup>133</sup> Fox and Stowell suggest, “Internal MiTTs were assigned a wide variety of people who received no training on their role as an advisor. Some units recognize the importance of the mission and send skilled people, while others see this as just another tasker and fill it with any available Soldier.”<sup>134</sup> When units did not recognize the value or importance of the MiTT mission, they were likely to send their “least valuable” or least skilled soldiers to fill the vacant MiTT positions. By not manning the MiTTs with capable soldiers, these internal MiTTs were faced with increasingly difficult odds from their inception.

MiTTs across the services were plagued with similar problems of training and manning deficiencies. A Marine MiTT commander noted that, “This concept assumes that military transition teams are capable of executing the tasks of the transition mission” and that “the USMC MiTTs as organized, trained, educated is inadequate to meet current and future operational requirements as required in the National Strategy.”<sup>135</sup> Another MiTT commander observed that MiTTs were manned by whomever was available and were “thrown together from across the Army, many Transition Teams contained men who lacked the training, aptitude, and discipline to serve in these autonomous roles.”<sup>136</sup> David Voorhies claims, “Most (augmentees) were lower enlisted and lacked the

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<sup>132</sup> Joe Fox and Dana Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” in *Air Land Sea Bulletin*, no. 2008–2 (Washington, DC: Air Land Sea Application (ALSA) Center, 2008), 26.

<sup>133</sup> Fox and Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” 27.

<sup>134</sup> Fox and Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” 27.

<sup>135</sup> Jones, *Advisor 2.0*, 1.

<sup>136</sup> David Voorhies, *MiTT Happens: Insight into Advising the Iraqi Army* (Ft. Benning, GA: Combined Army Tactics Directorate, USAIC, 2007), 4.



necessary experience and training to adequately advise their Iraqi counterparts.”<sup>137</sup> Compounding the issues presented by the organizational design of the MiTTs, the selection of their personnel, and the lack of sufficient training was the lack of cross cultural competence of the MiTTs prior to their deployment.

MiTTs were organized similarly to a SF Operational Detachment Alpha (SFODA), with 12 soldiers working in the fields of operations, administration, logistics, signal, and medical.<sup>138</sup> One MiTT commander explained that his “principal duties entailed leading an 11-man transition team to advise and train an Iraqi Infantry Battalion Commander and maintain tactical over-watch of a 750-man Iraqi Army Battalion in combat.” The commander added:

I am not a Special Forces officer. I don’t speak Arabic. My cultural understanding of the Middle East was restricted to cultural briefings by the Army and what I read in professional journals and books. At the time, I had not even deployed to fight the Global war on Terror.<sup>139</sup>

The commander lamented that after being assigned the task of MiTT commander, “in my heart, I believe that I was woefully unqualified to assume this important mission.”<sup>140</sup>

The pre-deployment training for MiTTs undoubtedly improved throughout the course of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. However, many times MiTTs were deployed without the amount of training required to serve as advisors to foreign troops. A MiTT commander remarked on his MiTT specific training prior to deployment, “The training I received as a MiTT advisor was abysmal. We were treated like mobilized National Guardsmen, and very little of the training dealt with training Iraqis specifically. Most of it was mandatory pre-deployment training and force protection [tactics, techniques, and procedures] TTPs.”<sup>141</sup> Regarding the training received by MiTTs, a Marine MiTT commander noted, “As a quantitative measure of all courses, 95 percent of training time,

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<sup>137</sup> Voorhies, *MiTT Happens*, 5.

<sup>138</sup> “American Special Ops,” accessed October 6, 2014, <http://www.americanspecialops.com/special-forces/odas/>.

<sup>139</sup> Voorhies, *MiTT Happens*, 2–3.

<sup>140</sup> Voorhies, *MiTT Happens*, 2–3.

<sup>141</sup> Voorhies, *MiTT Happens*, 5.

is allotted to combat skills internal to the advisor team; however, combat skills about organization survival don't necessarily translate to mission accomplishment.”<sup>142</sup>

Based on feedback from MiTT AARs, changes in pre-deployment training occurred throughout the course of both wars. However, the implementation of quality and sufficient pre-deployment training was not timely and was not resourced properly. Fox and Stowell claim, “While the improvement in advisor training rested on the high caliber of its leaders and Soldiers, they were not properly resourced at the institutional level.”<sup>143</sup> AAR comments indicate that “the Army’s current 60-day advisor training course is too short—especially considering the fact that many Soldiers selected as advisors need re-training on basic military skills, such as weapons qualification and first aid.”<sup>144</sup> For example, during the pre-deployment training of MiTTs from the Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTCI), the training plan directed training focused on the core tasks of shoot, move, and communicate. Of the 54 sub-tasks associated with those, only three were focused on the culture or language of their Iraqi counterparts.<sup>145</sup> Weapons qualification, vehicle operations, technical communication, medical training and other combat focused tasks were clearly the priority in the case of this MiTT pre-deployment training. Additionally, as Fox and Stowell point out, “Subjects, such as cross cultural communications, language training, and foreign military structure and functions are not trained or are inadequately covered.”<sup>146</sup> Table 3 displays a breakdown of the required training for MNSTCI MiTTs prior to their deployments to Iraq.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Jones, *Advisor 2.0*, 7, 10–11.

<sup>143</sup> Fox and Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” 27.

<sup>144</sup> Fox and Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” 28.

<sup>145</sup> Rick Fink, “Iraqi Ministry of Defense Brief,” 52–58, accessed October 6, 2014, <https://search.us.army.mil/search/>.

<sup>146</sup> Fox and Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” 28.

<sup>147</sup> Fink, “Iraqi Ministry of Defense Brief,” 52–58.

Table 3. MiTT Training Plan

SHOOT	MOVE	COMMUNICATE	LIFE SUPPORT TASKS	ADVISOR TASKS
Qualify on all Individual Weapons (M4, M9, M203)	Driver's Training	Common MiTT Communication Equipment	Medical	Working with IA Counterparts
Zero M68 optic and infrared aiming light (AN/PAQ-4)	Mounting of Machine Gun Systems		Field Ordering Officer	Interpreters
Crew Served Weapons	WARLOCK (anti IED system) Training		Pay Agents	Relationship Building
Night Vision	Vehicle Communications Systems		Base Ops and Logistics	Non-Tactical Vehicle use
Mounted Crew Drills	Convoy Procedures		Working with Contractors (U.S. and Local)	Uniforms
Dismounted Crew Drills	Blue Force Tracker Vehicle Recovery Call for Fire/ quick reaction force (QRF)/ medical evacuation (MEDEVAC)		R&R; Leave/ Passes Mail; morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR); Communication- Blackout	Team Speak/VOIP; Conferences- IA and U.S.
AK 47 Training	Rule of Engagement; Reporting Procedures		Property Accountability/ Reporting/ Proper use of AC/Heaters	Coordination with Iraqi Ground Forces Command (IGFC) and Partnership Units; Foreign Disclosure; local area network(LAN) setup

Reports from MiTT reviews held comments like, “Advisor training deficiencies were soon apparent,”<sup>148</sup> “Not every Soldier is capable of being a good advisor,”<sup>149</sup> and “Major deficiencies remain in the current *ad hoc* method of shaping advisor operations—not just in training but in the entire “advisor program” as a whole.”<sup>150</sup> Unfortunately,

<sup>148</sup> Fox and Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” 27.

<sup>149</sup> Fox and Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” 28.

<sup>150</sup> Fox and Stowell, “American Advisors: A Way Ahead,” 27.

these opinions, which were shaped by MiTT performance, were not isolated. As the training for MiTTs was still being developed and refined, many of the finer points of being a foreign advisor were not acquired until the MiTT advisors were well into their deployments with their Iraqi or Afghan counterparts. A MiTT commander noted that his pre-deployment training was not all that was needed during his time on a MiTT:

Being politically correct and culturally sensitive is great if you're merely visiting an Arab country for a short period of time on a diplomatic visit, but if you want to train them and advise them in combat you have to get them to do things they ordinarily would not do. To understand them to the point of being able to influence them to motivate action, you must know how they think, know what motivates them, and know how they react to both danger and incentive.<sup>151</sup>

The MiTT commander added that one of his most important lessons learned after deploying was to "Know their History, Get Rapport...but Be Yourself."<sup>152</sup>

The level of success achieved by MiTTs may have been greater if increased emphasis had been placed on both the selection and training of the personnel that made up those teams. Conducting SFA and advising foreign troops are both challenging missions in themselves. Sending both unqualified and undertrained soldiers to conduct those missions only increases the difficulty of achieving success in those missions. Many of these AAR comments suggest that MiTTs were not trained to understand the culture and the cultural nuisances they would face during their deployments. Illustrations of the pitfalls of MiTT selection, training, and utilization may serve the SF regiments as examples to avoid when preparing SF operators to be culturally proficient.

### **C. MCDONALD'S IN EAST ASIA**

After viewing the success of a small restaurant started by the McDonald brothers, Ray Kroc acquired the rights to the McDonald's name and launched his company nationwide in 1955. Within three years, McDonald's had sold 100 million hamburgers.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Voorhies, *MiTT Happens*, 10.

<sup>152</sup> Voorhies, *MiTT Happens*, 8.

<sup>153</sup> "The Ray Kroc Story," accessed October 5, 2014, [http://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en/our\\_story/our\\_history/the\\_ray\\_kroc\\_story.html](http://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en/our_story/our_history/the_ray_kroc_story.html).

The McDonald's website claims, "Ray Kroc wanted to build a restaurant system that would be famous for food of consistently high quality and uniform methods of preparation. He wanted to serve burgers, buns, fries and beverages that tasted just the same in Alaska as they did in Alabama."<sup>154</sup> The McDonald's franchise has been astronomically successful both in the United States and abroad. Today, according to James Watson, author of *Golden Arches East*, "McDonald's operates in more than 100 countries."<sup>155</sup> The willingness to seek out what is culturally acceptable in each country, combined with the western appeal of McDonald's, and a common theme throughout their restaurants has been a blueprint for success in their overseas franchises.

McDonald's success overseas, however, was not guaranteed. In fact, countless American enterprises fail overseas. Overseas business analyst Nicole Knicker claims, "Many franchises that market their products on a worldwide scale can either fail miserably to succeed in attracting their audiences overseas. One company that is doing it right is McDonald's."<sup>156</sup> Knicker goes on to assert, "They are a franchise that has succeeded in incorporating Global Marketing Strategies by taking advantage of the cultural differences each country has, by incorporating these cultural differences tastefully into their marketing strategies."<sup>157</sup> In addition to catering to local cultures, McDonald's has ensured that the unique Americanism of the franchise was not lost. Panos Mourdoukoutas, author of *McDonald's Winning Strategy*, argues, "McDonald's rode the globalization trend by transferring the American way of life to many countries around the world. At the same time, it adapted to the social context of each country by franchising of local entrepreneurs."<sup>158</sup> A look at the specifics of how McDonald's has been successful overseas may be beneficial if applied to SF operations and working with foreign cultures in the human domain.

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<sup>154</sup> "McDonald's."

<sup>155</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 12.

<sup>156</sup> Nicole Knicker, "McDonald's: Winning at Global Marketing Strategies," Global E Brands, accessed August 24, 2014, <http://globalebrands.com/mcdonalds-winning-at-global-marketing-strategies/>.

<sup>157</sup> Knicker, *McDonald's*.

<sup>158</sup> Panos Mourdoukoutas, "McDonald's Winning Strategy, At Home And Abroad," *Forbes*, accessed August 24, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdoukoutas/2012/04/20/mcdonalds-winning-strategy-at-home-and-abroad/>.

While McDonald's has been successful in incorporating local culture into its brand, not all communities are eager to adopt McDonald's and its Western flavor. Watson explains that

Chinese leaders appear to be aligning themselves with European and American intellectuals who have long equated McDonald's and its rivals in the fast food industry as agents of *cultural imperialism*—a new form of exploitation that results from the export of popular culture from the United States, Japan, and Europe to other parts of the world.<sup>159</sup>

Despite occasional pushback from Asian traditionalists, McDonald's has worked to embed itself into the local culture. Watson describes it as such:

Corporations that are capable of manipulating personal “tastes” will thrive as state authorities lose control over the distribution and consumption of goods and services. Popular culture, in this view, generates a vision, a fantasy, of the good life, and if the Big Mac, Coke, and Disney cartoons are perceived as an integral part of that life, American companies cannot lose.<sup>160</sup>

The success of McDonald's around the globe suggests that they have incorporated local cultures into its practices and menu items. However, some still insist that as McDonald's does this, they are in reality forcing the local culture to become more American. Watson argues

we (the U.S.) purvey a culture based on mass entertainment and mass gratification... the cultural message we transmit through Hollywood and McDonald's goes out across the world to capture, and also to undermine, other societies.... Unlike more traditional conquerors, we are not content merely to subdue others: We insist that they be like us.<sup>161</sup>

The success of McDonald's is in its international business approach; specifically, adaptability and flexibility have allowed it to flourish in overseas markets while, at the same time, its brand has remained constant. *ABC News* reported that, “the average McDonald's brings in \$2.6 million in sales annually.”<sup>162</sup> Watson goes on to say, “The

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<sup>159</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 4–5.

<sup>160</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 5.

<sup>161</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 5.

<sup>162</sup> Stefanie Tuder, “McDonald's Hamburger University Is No Joke,” *ABC News*, accessed October 8, 2014, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/lifestyle/2014/04/mcdonalds-hamburger-university-is-no-joke/>.

Golden Arches have become an icon of international business and popular culture, recognized nearly everywhere on the planet, the very name, its “Mc” prefix, and the ubiquitous Golden Arches are recognized and imitated throughout the world.”<sup>163</sup>

In order to ensure the standardization and quality of McDonald’s franchises, the company has its own formal education system. The McDonald’s website explains that, “In 1961, Ray [Kroc] launched a training program, later called Hamburger University. There, franchisees and operators were trained in the scientific methods of running a successful McDonald’s. Today, more than 80,000 people have graduated from the program.”<sup>164</sup> *ABC News* notes, “the facility has 19 full-time professors who teach different courses aimed at how to run a McDonald’s restaurant for managers, mid-managers, and executives in 28 different languages.”<sup>165</sup> The creation of Hamburger University, which is a true global training center for its franchisees and employees from around the world, ensures that there is a common theme among all McDonald’s franchises.

McDonald’s goes to great lengths to ensure that franchisees are properly trained to uphold the core values of the McDonald’s brand. Moneymax101.com states, “McDonald’s requires that franchisees spend nine unpaid months (attending Hamburger University or shadowing other established franchises) learning all aspects of the McDonald’s corporate culture.”<sup>166</sup> These steps display the lengths that the corporation goes in order to train and indoctrinate franchisees in the McDonald’s core values and to ensure that those values remain present wherever that franchise is located.

Furthermore, McDonald’s has created a product that is symbolic; it is more than just American food. This point is echoed by Watson:

The Golden Arches have always represented something other than food. McDonald’s symbolizes different things to different people at different

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<sup>163</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, vi, 2.

<sup>164</sup> “McDonald’s.”

<sup>165</sup> Tudor, *McDonald’s Hamburger University Is No Joke*.

<sup>166</sup> “Case Study: Why Did McDonald’s Leave Jamaica. 7 Reasons—A Look at Jamaican Franchising,” accessed October 8, 2014, <http://moneymax101.com/research/case-study-why-did-mcdonalds-leave-jamaica-7-reasons-a-look-at-jamaican-franchising/>.

times in their lives: Predictability, safety, convenience, fun, familiarity, sanctuary, cleanliness, modernity, culinary tourism, and “connectedness” to the world beyond.<sup>167</sup>

By carrying these values or norms with their franchise, across different cultures, McDonald’s can adopt local customs while remaining standardized across cultures. Watson further states, “The key to McDonald’s worldwide success is that people everywhere know what to expect when they pass through the Golden Arches.”<sup>168</sup>

McDonald’s represents something different to all of its customers. However, there is a common theme at all McDonald’s. White notes, “The familiarity factor is central to McDonald’s success; McDonald’s stands for home, familiarity, and friendship.”<sup>169</sup> This type of standardization helps the McDonald’s brand remain popular across different countries and different cultures. While standardized, the McDonald’s brand is flexible enough to change depending on the culture in which it is operating.

James Cantalupo, president of McDonald’s International, claims that his goals for McDonald’s is to “become as much a part of the local culture as possible.” He objects when “people call us a multinational. I like to call us *multilocal*.”<sup>170</sup> What McDonald’s refers to simply as its localization strategy, can be applied across different international business models or applied to SF and their overseas operations. Watson claims, “McDonald’s localization strategy revolves around the ability to discern, and respond to consumer needs.”<sup>171</sup> This localization strategy allows the franchise owner, many times a local to the area, to determine what is culturally acceptable in that location and provides that franchise owner the leverage to modify his local standard, while keeping with the McDonald’s brand and core values.

One example of McDonald’s adaptability to other cultures is in its menu. Specifically, McDonald’s adjusts their menu to dietary restrictions, consults with local

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<sup>167</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 38.

<sup>168</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 23.

<sup>169</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 22.

<sup>170</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 12.

<sup>171</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 14.



religious leaders, and plays directly to local values. Knicker claims, “McDonald’s creates menu options that satisfy the palates of those countries that may not like all American cuisine selections. These new options give those international markets the ability to enjoy McDonald’s while staying true to their cultural customs.”<sup>172</sup> For example, Watson points out, to make their menu socially acceptable in Malaysia and Singapore, “McDonald’s underwent rigorous inspections by Muslim clerics to ensure ritual cleanliness; the chain was rewarded with a *halal* (religiously clean) certificate, indicating the total absence of pork products.”<sup>173</sup> Additionally, Knicker notes that “McDonald’s advertisements in Malaysia try to feature the importance of family values and how McDonald’s can bring them closer to each other” playing to the importance of family in Malaysian culture.<sup>174</sup> Knicker also describes, “In India, a country where eating beef is frowned upon, they have created the “Pizza McPuff” and the “McVeggie.” It is choices like this that make their international markets feel as though McDonald’s is trying to serve the country’s cultural differences.”<sup>175</sup> McDonald’s continually seeks what is socially acceptable in each franchise location and works to incorporate those norms into its own brand.

As a result of the flexibility of McDonald’s, the franchise has seamlessly immersed itself into the local culture. Watson claims

it is no longer possible to distinguish between what is “local” and what is “foreign.” Who is to say that Mickey Mouse is not Japanese, or that Ronald McDonald is not Chinese? To millions of children who watch Chinese television, “Uncle McDonald” (alias Ronald) is probably more familiar than the mythical characters of Chinese folklore.<sup>176</sup>

Watson notes that by making the necessary cultural changes and by adopting the local norms, “McDonald’s convinced its customers that transnational is local.”<sup>177</sup> The locals have grown to accept the McDonald’s culture as part of their own, without sacrificing

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<sup>172</sup> Knicker, *McDonald’s*.

<sup>173</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 23.

<sup>174</sup> Knicker, *McDonald’s*.

<sup>175</sup> Knicker, *McDonald’s*.

<sup>176</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 10.

<sup>177</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 107.

their values to the west. For example, Watson claims, “The people of Hong Kong have embraced American-style fast foods. But, they have not been stripped of their cultural traditions; they have not become “Americanized” in any but the most superficial ways.”<sup>178</sup> By keeping what is important to each local culture present throughout the atmosphere that each restaurant conveys, McDonald’s is able to engrain itself into the fabric of the local culture. Watson adds, “McDonald’s has become a routine, unremarkable feature of the urban landscape in Japan and Hong Kong. It is so “local” that many younger customers do not know of the company’s foreign origins.”<sup>179</sup> Essentially, McDonald’s incorporates so many of the key aspects of the culture present around each franchise location, that McDonald’s is able to become a part of the local culture itself.

McDonald’s success overseas can be attributed to several aspects of their business model, many of which can be applied by SF while operating overseas. Perhaps the most important factor is what McDonald’s refers to as its localization strategy. Watson asserts, “McDonald’s localization strategy revolves around the ability to discern, and respond to consumer needs.”<sup>180</sup> McDonald’s recognizes that each culture has its own sensibilities to which it must cater. By infusing what is local into the McDonald’s brand, the franchise is viewed, at least in part, as local and increases buy in from the populace to the point that the outsider is no longer an outsider, but considered local. McDonald’s does this while retaining a standardized set of values and customer service, which adds to both its consistency and familiarity wherever it is located. These standards and core set of values is further maintained by rigorous education and training, ensuring that the local McDonald’s management is versed in the policies and procedures of the corporation. This indoctrination is achieved either through extensive training at Hamburger University or during the mandatory shadowing of an established franchise. This delicate balance of local and U.S. norms and values is a model that could provide important clues for SF cultural training for partnering with foreign countries, and will be elaborated on in the concluding chapter.

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<sup>178</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 80.

<sup>179</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 109.

<sup>180</sup> Watson, *Golden Arches East*, 14.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

The three case studies presented in this chapter offer a range of strategies for creating teams aimed at operating overseas and training team members for cross cultural engagements. The OSS focused their recruiting efforts on segments of the population who already possessed a high degree of foreign language proficiency and cultural knowledge of the area in which they would operate. The OSS recognized that by recruiting persons who already possessed these attributes, it could focus on training the recruits in military aspects of their job as operatives. In other words, the OSS recognized that it is much easier to train a culture expert to become a soldier, than it is to train a soldier to be a culture expert.

In contrast, the hardships faced by MiTT personnel and the critiques of their performance while deployed are examples of the importance of selecting the right personnel and providing adequate cultural training prior to their deployment. In addition to selecting the right people for the job, it is equally important that they receive the necessary training. AARs and personal testimonies reveal that MiTTs were not provided with adequate cultural and language training to be effective advisors in Iraq and Afghanistan. The ad hoc standup of the MiTTs, the selection of the personnel, the lack of emphasis placed on adequate training for their mission, and the speed in which they were fielded all had a combined effect on the lack of success in their mission. As combat and tactical training took precedence in the MiTTs pre-deployment preparations, culture and language training did not receive the emphasis that it required. Many times these MiTTs were underprepared for the cultural engagements that awaited them after they arrived in theater, due to the abbreviated or inferior cultural training they had received.

The success of McDonald's overseas is attributed to their ability to identify and cater to the cultural nuances, which are important to the locals, and resulted in the assimilation of McDonald's into the local culture. Moreover, McDonald's achieved this while maintaining a standardized set of norms and values throughout their franchises.

A heightened level of cultural awareness, cultural flexibility, and cross cultural competence all contributed to the success of the OSS in WWII and the McDonald's

restaurant franchise overseas. To the contrary, MiTTs were hampered by their lack of cultural proficiency while operating in Iraq and Afghanistan. As demonstrated by these three cases, no outside organization can be completely culturally proficient in another's culture. The final chapter will take these lessons learned from these cases and apply them to SF, considering the role that new selection and training techniques could play in making SF soldiers more culturally astute and mission effective.

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## V. CONCLUSION

Culture is a very tough concept to grasp; becoming an expert on any culture may prove an equally difficult task. Despite this, understanding and leveraging culture is a stated goal of U.S. Special Forces and identified as critical to mission success. This thesis has aimed to better understand culture for SF by, first, providing a basic overview of the academic debates surrounding culture, and offer a working definition for the U.S. Special Forces Regiment. Second, this thesis investigated three cases outside of SF: the creation of culturally proficient teams in the OSS in World War II, the ad hoc construction MiTTs in Iraq and Afghanistan and their efforts to train indigenous forces, and the McDonald's franchise's efforts to open restaurants around the world by remaining American yet becoming "local."

As presented in Chapter II, how culture is defined and how it is understood varies widely across academic disciplines. For example, some scholars shy away from culture and refuse to define it, while others refer to culture simply as a concept. The business world takes slightly less of a conceptual view of culture and focuses more on the role of culture in economics, negotiations, or in transnational business relations. The U.S. military and its component commands have varying definitions of culture as well. This lack of consensus in defining culture, its purpose, and how to study it presents considerable challenges for USASOC and its requirement to make SF culturally proficient. However, the U.S. Army's counterinsurgency manual offers a definition of culture while, not perfect, is useful, and describes it as

an "operational code" that is valid for an entire group of people; this observation corresponds to academic literature that describes culture as a motivating force. In other words, culture conditions the individual's range of actions and ideas, including what to do and not do, how to do or not do it, and whom to do it with or not to do it with.<sup>181</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to identify not only what culture is, but also what it does. Ultimately, culture is a code that affects behavior. As described in chapter II,

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<sup>181</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3–6.

cultural codes, specifically social capital, is particularly useful for training SF operators to identify values and norms of a culture and how they govern behavior. Social capital can be compared to rapport, or in other instances social capital could equate to trust. By identifying and catering to the informal values and norms of a group, SF operators may be able to build rapport and credibility with that group, and ultimately affect their behavior. Training SF operators to identify values and norms of a culture in order to gain social capital could prove more effective than attempting to train an operator to be an expert of the specifics of a given culture.

Second, this thesis used case studies to better understand successes and failures of cultural engagements outside of SF in the hopes of gaining new and useful insights for leveraging culture as a warfighting capability. By looking at historical case studies of other organizations operating overseas, many times in a “by, with, and through” capacity, the SF regiment may be able to use some of the best practices and avoid some of the pitfalls of those organizations.

The OSS in WWII, MiTTs operating in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the McDonald’s franchises operation overseas all provide important lessons in dealing with foreign cultures. Some of the success of the OSS may be attributed to their focused recruiting and practice of selecting personnel who already possessed firsthand knowledge of the culture and language of their targeted area of operation. The OSS took advantage of the United States’ vast recruiting pool of recent immigrants to build a culturally and linguistically proficient force. The OSS also recognized that it was much easier to train a culture and language expert to be a soldier than it was to train a soldier to be an expert in culture and language. By recruiting from specific ethnic groups, both from within the military and from the general population, the OSS was able to ensure that their operatives were culturally proficient.

MiTTs faced considerable challenges from their inception. Most MiTTs were rushed into operation by their higher headquarters, were inadequately equipped, and sometimes manned with personnel who were not suited to serve as military advisors. Exacerbating the difficulties of being improperly manned, MiTTs were given inadequate training in their target cultures. Moreover, many of the soldiers selected to serve on

MiTTs demonstrated little comprehension of the combat skills required to serve as an advisor. Training, therefore, focused primarily on basic combat skills and pushed cultural training aside. The speed in which MiTTs were fielded, their lack of attention to the Soldiers and Marines chosen for the mission, and the scant training in cultural nuances all led to a questionable record of success in training indigenous security forces.

A look at the practices of an international business, such as McDonald's, offers a fresh perspective on how to approach overseas operations in a culture centric environment. While McDonald's franchises are never faced with the same stresses that an SF operator might confront on the battlefield, businesses are continually challenged with the prospect of financial failure. The success of McDonald's overseas demonstrates that the ability to identify and adjust and cater to cultural nuances, which are important to the locals, results in McDonalds' incorporation into the local culture itself. Moreover, McDonald's achieved success while maintaining a standardized set of norms and values throughout their franchises, making it extremely successful as a global fast food chain.

Furthermore, McDonald's training program, through both Hamburger University and its system of "shadowing" managers through a mentoring program, successfully indoctrinates franchises with the core values of the corporation. At the same time, McDonald's localization strategy allows franchises to blend local customs with the western appeal of the McDonald's brand. In other words, McDonald's franchises overseas are known for adopting local norms while keeping the core values of McDonald's.

#### **A. APPLYING THESE LESSONS TO SF**

The case studies investigated in this thesis offer valuable lessons for SF. First, SF operators can learn from the mistakes of the MiTTs by adhering to the SOF truths. Although MiTTs were not SOF, they were modeled like an SFODA and were given a mission, which is commonly assigned to SOF. However, contrary to the SOF truths, MiTTs were mass produced. Additionally, SF operators must remain cognizant of the fact that combat advisory skills require advisors to be competent in combat skills while working across the cultural divides that differentiate them from their counterparts.



Focusing primarily on the combat tasks associated with an operation and not the cultural aspects may decrease the effectiveness of SF operators when serving as advisors to foreign troops. Pre-deployment training, therefore, must balance training in combat skills with education in cultural skills in order to ensure that SF operators are able to be effective across cultural lines.

Lessons from the OSS also can serve as examples of success for SF operators while working with their foreign counterparts. As the OSS demonstrated, selection of culturally prequalified personnel can limit the training time required to produce an effective operative. By focusing SF recruiting on the civilian population, specifically on minority and immigrant groups, SF can add culture and language experts to the ranks of the regiment. However, this approach may be limited. For example, 7th Group Special Forces has managed to leverage the substantial number of Latinos in the Army to create teams that often include native speakers or those familiar with specific Latino cultures. However, other ethnic groups may be more difficult to recruit. For example, Arab speakers and those that have firsthand knowledge of Arab culture are few in the U.S. military and in high demand. Additionally, the OSS demonstrated that selecting an individual who possessed initiative, common sense, and cultural sensitivity was more important than selecting an individual with a certain technical skill. The OSS recognized that it was much easier to train a culture and language expert to be a soldier than it was to train a soldier to be an expert in culture and language. The SF regiment may be well served to recognize the same, although this approach does have limitations.

Many lessons can be learned from the McDonald's corporation regarding their techniques and procedures when training for operating overseas. For example, SF leaders and planners should recognize that SF operators need the latitude to create their own localization strategy, similar to the approach of McDonald's franchises. In other words, just as McDonald's franchisees are able to identify marketing strategies that will be successful locally, SF operators should be able to identify what lines of operation will be successful in the areas they are operating. Also similar to the McDonald's approach, as long as the SF operators remain true to the "core values" of the mission, a team's ability to localize their approach should be encouraged by their higher command.

Although not easily duplicated, the techniques and procedures utilized by the OSS and McDonald's for successful operations in a foreign culture could be applied by the SF regiment and can contribute to creating a more culturally proficient operator. Furthermore, with the importance of cultural proficiency on the outcome of operations, these techniques and procedures can help create more effective SF operators overall.

Additionally, SF faces limitations in becoming more culturally proficient. First, there is no established way to measure cultural proficiency in SF. Given the ambiguity of the subject of culture and the countless number of cultures present in a single region of the world, creating a test to measure cultural proficiency may not be feasible. However, other methods to ensure SF operators are culturally proficient should be implemented. For example, other possible methods include ensuring that operators are cross-culturally competent by certifying that they are well informed about the religious, political, and geographical history of their Group's entire area of operation. While being informed about their AO will not guarantee that operators are culturally proficient, knowledge shared between an indigenous culture and an SF operator can lead to rapport and better communications between the two cultures.

Another possible method to ensure cultural proficiency is to assign SF ODAs a specific "micro-region" within their Group's AOR to maintain an ongoing and in-depth study of the cultures, populations, terrain, security forces, and power structures contained within that micro-region. Ideally, each ODA should be able to conduct all of their Theater Security Cooperation Program (TSCP) and Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) deployments within that micro-region, further building the cultural proficiency of that ODA. While each micro-region may contain multiple complex cultures within it, the ability to become familiar with and even proficient in those cultures is greater than compared to the group's entire AOR.

Second, the current doctrine surrounding culture combined with the additional required training tasks leave SF leadership little open space on their training schedule. Lack of training time makes it increasingly difficult for SF operators to satisfy the requirements placed on them by their higher commands. As demonstrated in Chapter III, SF operators and ODAs are required to possess and maintain proficiency in an extensive

list of skills. Moreover, after identifying the directives laid out by the DOD, the U.S. Army, and USASOC, SF commanders are faced with the daunting task of ensuring that their units are prepared to conduct the operations with which they are tasked. Clearly, preparation for each mission is unique to the objective of that mission and the tasks required in achieving that objective. Despite the challenges associated with meeting training requirements, educating SF soldiers in culture should be part of the mission preparation.

To help mitigate the difficulty of balancing cultural training and mission specific training, SF leaders should normalize both culture and language training among the operational units, similar to physical fitness training (PT). Physical fitness is one of the core tenets of being a soldier. Cultural proficiency must be viewed similarly since many SF missions require the operator to be cross culturally competent. Just as with PT, daily cultural training should be conducted to ensure operators are remaining proficient. By consistently and continually conducting cultural training, SF leadership will be better prepared to focus their remaining training time on mission specific tasks prior to deployment.

Lastly, in addition to meeting the basic requirements for language and culture proficiency, additional language and culture training for SF operators is not mandated after completion of the qualification course; this training is expected to be conducted by individual operators in order to remain proficient in both fields. USASFC requires language ratings of individual SF operators to be updated annually. However, language proficiency does not equate to cultural proficiency and language training should not be used in lieu of cultural training. In addition, without a measure of effectiveness for proficiency or even a target culture to study, individual operators and their detachments are charged with being culturally proficient in whatever area of the world they find themselves conducting operations.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

To remedy these issues, top-down emphasis must be placed on cultural proficiency. Due to the profound variety among cultures in an area and the difficulty of

measuring proficiency in a single culture, USASFC should assign SF operators a region of the world that coincides with their foreign language. Current regional alignment of SF Groups has been displaced by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; now that major combat operations have ended in both areas, the SF Regiment should get back to its roots and regionally align. Moreover, SF operators within those groups have a number of languages that may not be commonly found within the Group's AORs. For example, SF operators assigned to 5th Special Forces Group may be assigned Russian or French languages, which may not be commonly used in many of the Arab nations found in the Group's AOR. Alongside returning to regional alignment, bi-annual, self-study training can be managed by USASFC, where the operator will complete online training and education to ensure a common base of knowledge is shared among operators who are assigned that region of the world. While this top down emphasis from USASFC will not create cultural experts, it will ensure that SF operators remain familiar with a specific region and the cultures that exist within that region. Ideally, this training would better prepare operators to work with the indigenous population of an area. While not an expert in the cultures of the area, the SF operator may be more prepared to deal with the indigenous cultures and able to build social capital with the locals by having a greater understanding of what to do and not do, how to do or not do it, and with whom to do it or not to do it.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 3–6.

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